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'That's Why the Lady is a Vamp'

Discourses of Criminality, Sexual Inversion and Vampirism in Fin-de-Siècle and Modernist Cultures

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

Department of English

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *That's Why the Lady is a Vamp: Discourses of Criminality, Sexual Inversion and Vampirism in Fin-de-Siècle and Modern Cultures* submitted by April Miller in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates scientific discourses of criminality and homosexuality as indicators of public anxiety over the changing status of women in America and Britain at the turn of the century. As women began to move beyond the confines of domesticity and the women's rights movement took hold, female social and sexual deviance was represented, in a myriad of cultural forms, as a dangerous source of social and racial decline. In criminological and evolutionary discourses, the criminal woman's body was constructed as a physical and psychical illustration of atavistic reversion, an example of 'femininity' which, in overstepping the boundaries of acceptable female behavior, betrayed a dangerously primitive and overly masculine nature. Chapter one explores the masculinizing of exceptional women and the parallels between constructs of female criminality and female sexual inversion as evidenced in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Chapter two considers the widespread appeal of the female sexual predator and the multiple meanings of female vampirism by examining a wide range of popular representations, including paintings, pulp novels, silent film and sheet music. By creating images of women that strongly linked female sexual and social independence with perversion and monstrosity, the construct of the 'mannish' female vampire was intended to warn against uncommonly independent 'femininity' and increasingly uncontrollable women.

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Introduction: Recipe for a Vampire

After trying, unsuccessfully, to summarize my thesis topic in ten words or less, I decided on a convenient, albeit ambiguous response to curious friends: 'the vampire.' With startling frequency, I found that the mere mention of vampires produced one of two results: a never-ending series of questions, or an uncomfortable silence. As I delved deeper into my subject matter, I began to realize that this aggregation of fear and fascination is characteristic of the public response to the vampire throughout history. Whether it be the lamia of Greek mythology, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Theda Bara's Vamp, or Fran Rubel Kuzui's *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, the monstrous image of the vampire has captivated the popular imagination, inspiring both revolt and praise, for centuries. The vampire truly is the monster we love to hate.

While I may have chosen the word 'vampire' to summarize my topic, this thesis investigates more than just the bloodsucking ghoul of ancient myth and folklore. Rather, I have chosen to explore how, through the deployment of discourses on degeneration, criminality and sexual inversion, women went through a monstrous metamorphosis at the turn of the century as the New Woman, the sexual invert, the criminal and the sexually independent woman were assigned attributes of the vampire. As women began to move beyond the confines of domesticity and the women's rights movement took hold, female social and sexual deviance was represented, in a myriad of cultural forms, as a cause of widespread social and racial decline. Furthermore, as all women were deemed guilty by association, even seemingly 'normal' women were ascribed with distinctly vampiric physical and psychical characteristics that challenged the conception of an idealized 'feminine' form.

During the fin-de-siècle, the public preoccupation with social degeneration, theories of evolution and changes to traditional gender roles both inspired and impacted a series of scientific discourses that served to link female sexual independence to sexual perversion and social disease. Scientific discourses of evolution and criminology sought to contain women within a traditional role by insisting that the woman who operated outside of the domestic realm threatened the progress of the entire race. In criminological and evolutionary discourses, the criminal woman's body was constructed as a physical and psychical illustration of atavistic reversion, an example of 'femininity' which, in overstepping the boundaries of acceptable female behavior, betrayed a dangerously primitive and overly masculine nature. Pseudoscientific discourses of criminality insisted that as less evolved members of the race, all women harbored the potential for primitive reversion and criminal behavior, a criminality that manifested itself in a vampiric tendency to usurp the powers and privileges of the male. As has often been noted in analysis of the female offender, moral panic regarding women and crime often coincides with the periods when women make strides toward equality (Chesney Lind 2-3). At the turn of the century, many people believed that suffrage and economic equality would render women incapable of fulfilling their duties as wives and mothers, claiming that women who sought equality with men were flirting with deviance and criminality. While women's naturally primitive nature was viewed as the principle source of their deviant potential, the gradual increase in rights for women precipitated a fear of the complete dissolution of gender boundaries and the belief that women would increasingly become participants in flagitious behavior.

Just as the fin-de-siècle is often marked as a turning point in popular understanding of gender relations, it is also frequently highlighted as a pivotal moment in gay and lesbian history. As Glennis Byron explains, "this was not only the era of the New Woman, but also the time in which society became more aware of homosexuality," when the medical community coined the term 'sexual inversion' (19). Due to the link established between female criminality and changing gender roles, the female offender was imputed with many of the overly 'mannish' physical and cerebral characteristics associated with the female sexual invert. While the discourse of sexual inversion may have been constructed as a means of justifying the existence of the homosexual and denouncing the persecution of same-sex desire, theories of inversion, like Lombrosian theories of female criminality, aligned female independence with physical and mental deviance and 'mannish' behavior. By suggesting that both sexually and socially deviant women possess identifiably 'masculine' characteristics, discourses of criminality and sexual inversion attempted to neutralize the dangerous potential of socially disruptive types of women.

My thesis, then, investigates scientific and popular discourses of criminality and homosexuality as indicators of public anxiety over the changing status of turn-of-the-century women and the belief that changes to traditional gender roles threatened to stall, or even reverse, social and racial advancements. In chapter one, "Creating a Female Monster: Female Criminality and Socio-Sexual Deviance in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," I explore how criminological discourses and the representation of female vampirism and female masculinity attempt to regulate the female body by categorizing deviance. In uncovering the parallels between discourses on female criminality and female sexual

inversion, I have examined Bram Stoker's fin-de-siècle novel, *Dracula,* and the author's portrayal of female deviance. By constructing images of socially and sexually aberrant women that betray signs of atavistic reversion and masculinity, Stoker's novel projects an image of deviant women that bears a striking resemblance to the 'normal' woman. By masculinizing the flagitious woman, Stoker's novel provides the origins for a reciprocal relationship between sexual inversion, criminality and vampirism.

My second chapter, "Reproducing the Vampire: Women, Agency and Monstrosity in Early-Twentieth-Century Culture," examines a wide range of popular representations of female vampirism that indicate the cultural impact of the vamp image. As the vamp began appearing in pulp novels, silent film and popular sheet music her image underwent many shifts in meaning while still retaining many of the characteristic of Stoker's deviant women that aligned female social and sexual independence with monstrosity. During the first few decades of the twentieth century, the image of the female vampire carried with her all the 'mannishly' atavistic physical and psychical baggage developed in *Dracula*. Both in an attempt to feed and capitalize on the public demand for the image of the female vampire, monstrous conceptions of the female form began appearing in an increasingly wide range of cultural forms; paintings, plays, pulp novels and films all began projecting images of the sexually predatory woman.

While many critics claim that the vamp's time in vogue was fleeting, this portion of my investigation shows how, like any good vampire, the vamp refused to become just a relic for the cultural archives; the vamp adapted to suit the political and social interests of her public as she began appearing in countless pieces of sheet music from the 1920s and 1930s. While the constraints of space and time limit this discussion, my examination

of these song sheets also touches on the increasingly racialized image of the vamp in popular music from this period. In examining the various forms of female vampirism that occupied the early-twentieth-century public imagination, from the public image of Theda Bara to the cabaret vamp of popular sheet music, a strong connection between female criminality and female masculinity can be established. In fact, criminal anthropology and sexology co-authored the complex historical and cultural construction of deviant female sexualities, creating links between lesbianism, vampirism and criminality; these links have persisted in representations of lesbianism in contemporary culture and have continued to align the assertive female sexual subject in general, and the lesbian in particular, with criminality and moral deviance. By creating images of women that strongly link female sexual and social independence with perversion and monstrosity, the image of the monstrous, 'mannish' woman was intended to warn against uncommonly independent examples of 'femininity' and contain the danger of increasingly uncontrollable women.

In my third chapter, "Uncovering a Transgressive Potential and the Queer Meaning of Top Hats and Sharp Teeth," I open a discussion of the increasingly popular act of reclaiming the female sexual predator, in all of her 'mannish' and vampiric glory, as an example of lesbian identity. From the sartorial borrowings of mannish dress by actresses in 1930s Hollywood to the lesbian vampire women of the 1980s, images of deviant female sexuality are being lauded as fascinating examples of the female sexual subject. Although one cannot ignore the predominantly negative connotations associated with the female vampire, the sexually predatory female does offer the viewer a certain level of transgressive potential. Whereas representations of female vampirism and

female masculinity often add fuel to the belief that women are intrinsically deviant, 'criminal' representations of female deviance also act as signifiers of sexual transgression and provide examples of women operating outside of the confines of a male-dominated social order. Many seemingly negative portrayals of the predatory female are reclaimed as transgressive examples of female subjectivity. As a monstrous body, the sexually predatory female is "transgressive and mutating; blurring boundaries in its ambiguity and indeterminancy. The monstrous speaks of the alien . . . the as yet unimagined and the unnamed potential hybrids and simulacra" (Nataf 173). In all three sections, I have shown how the sexualization and criminalization of female misbehavior serves an important symbolic function that both expands the possibilities of female representation and contains women through the deployment of negative stereotyping.

1

Creating a Female Monster: Female Criminality and Socio-Sexual Deviance in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Although criticism regarding Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is as diverse as the myriad interpretations of the vampire myth itself, most critics agree on one pervasive anxiety reflected in his infamous novel, an anxiety occasioned by the changing status of turn-of-the-century women: Would the dissolution of traditional gender boundaries create social chaos? As Christopher Craft explains, "what *Dracula* more than melodramatically stages is a violent contest for proprietorship of gender and sex roles: Who (which gender) shall be active and who passive?" (72-3). I want to suggest that Stoker's two types of monstrous women, the New Woman and the female vampire, share common physiognomies based on the precepts of biological determinism and criminal anthropology; they are women with uncharacteristically masculine bodies and minds. Just as the vampire woman is masculinized in order to explain her deviant behavior, the New Woman is masculinized in order to explain her intellectual abilities. By suggesting that both socially and sexually deviant women possess identifiably masculine characteristics, *Dracula* allows Stoker to represent the turn-of-the-century preoccupation with an unsettling type of woman--the mannish woman--and thereby to repeat, with a monstrous difference, a pivotal anxiety of late Victorian culture.

Following the mid-nineteenth-century diffusion of Darwinian theories of racial evolution, many fin-de-siècle thinkers began exploring a corollary notion: if the human

race and the societies it produces can evolve, they can also devolve or degenerate. Although society was reaping the benefits of advancements in science, industry and politics, many turn-of-the-century citizens questioned these progressions, seeing changes to Western civilization as indicators of social decline rather than social advancement. This preoccupation with social degeneration had a reciprocal effect on a variety of fields, including statistics, psychiatry, eugenics, and criminal anthropology; although the source of degeneration varied, a specific segment of the population was often identified as the cause of a larger social 'problem' (Byron 20). The suffrage movement, which challenged the traditional understanding of appropriate masculine and feminine behavior, was viewed by many as a crucial indication of more rampant social degeneration. When investigating the influence of degeneration discourses on Stoker's text, critics often focus on *Dracula's* portrayal of social and racial decline as it is precipitated by the invasion of England by a foreign body. As Stephen Arata explains, "*Dracula* enacts the period's most important and pervasive narrative of decline, a narrative of reverse colonization" (623).[1] In contrast, I want to examine the pseudo-scientific discourses in *Dracula* that use biological imagery and theories of devolution to identify a body which threatened to contaminate England from within: the 'degenerate' female body.

In response to reports of increasing criminal activity in urban centres, many social critics pinpointed a corporeal source of social and racial degeneration: the criminal body. In 1870 and 1890 respectively, Cesare Lombroso's *The Criminal Man* and Havelock Ellis'

[1] Other explorations of Stoker's portrayal of racial decline as precipitated by the invasion of a foreign body include David Glover's *Vampires, Mummies and Liberals* and Glennis Byron's "Introduction."

The Criminal appeared in print, thus contributing to the debate over degeneration by arguing that crime was the result of evolutionary atavism and "the criminal a relic of a vanished race" (Lombroso *CM* 135).[2] According to the concepts of criminal anthropology, the born criminal is an atavistic being who reproduces physical, psychical, and functional qualities of remote ancestors and is "doomed even before birth to a career of crime" (Lombroso *CM*, 101). In its original conception, criminal anthropology was intended as a mechanism for advancing the race; the study of crime would provide the diagnosis and the cure for moral illness by identifying threateningly regressive and diseased bodies within the general population. The discourses of criminal anthropology permitted an articulation and insertion of differentiated bodies into a discourse of social progress. (See figures 1 and 2). Proponents of this new branch of 'scientific' knowledge hoped to create a system whereby socially desirable bodies could be distinguished and protected from the physically and pathologically abject bodies that threatened to contaminate the general population and hinder social progress.

Although the study of physiognomy and mental physiology began as techniques of scientific study, criminological discourses soon began influencing a variety of cultural and social fields. As David Glover explains, "[p]hysiognomy often figured as a convenient method for ascertaining and depicting character in nineteenth-century novels. . . [being] given a widespread currency as a progressive science in such middle-class cultural institutions as the literary and philosophical societies" (71). In *Dracula*, Stoker

[2] In his text, Havelock Ellis explores many of the same ideas found in Lombroso's earlier studies of the criminal man. While Lombroso's text attempted to reach a more 'intellectual' audience and was not translated into English for the British and North American audience until 1911, Ellis' *The Criminal*, already in its fifth edition by 1914, was more widely read by the general population. Ellis' text is often regarded as the study that popularized criminological discourse in England (Glover 74). Well before either text appeared in English, the influence of Lombrosian discourse was evident in both scientific and popular literatures.

incorporates many aspects of the emergent discourse of criminology and the correlated 'scientific' process of identifying abhorrent bodies and behaviors. In particular, several critics have outlined the many explicit parallels between Lombroso's portrait of the criminal type and Stoker's rendering of the Count, often focusing on the two figures' remarkable physical resemblance.[3] In *Criminal Man,* the Lombrosian text most often sited by *Dracula* critics, Lombroso catalogues the physical signs of atavism which, to varying degrees, mark the individual with criminal tendencies: an aquiline nose with swollen nostrils, "like the beak of a bird of prey"; "a relic of the pointed ear characteristic of apes"; eyebrows that are "massive, almost meeting over the nose"; and abnormal dentition, with canines that are sometimes "long, sharp, and curving inward as in carnivores" (*CM* 10-17). In fashioning an image of Count Dracula, Stoker relies on physical and psychical qualities that bear a striking resemblance to Lombroso's 'born criminal':

> [the Count's] face was a strong--a very strong--aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily around the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose . . . the mouth . . . was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp teeth; these protruded over lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years . . . his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor. (48)

By marking him with the physical characteristics of Lombroso's born criminal the Count is easily identified by the other characters in the novel and the novel's turn-of-the-century readers; Dracula represents a degenerate body which exemplary English bodies must

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[3] While Woolf first outlined the parallels between Lombroso and Stoker in the *Annotated Dracula* (1975), Ernest Fontana's article provides a more thorough examination of Stoker's use of criminological discourse (1984). Glennis Byron's introductory essay to the Broadview edition of *Dracula* also points out the similarities between Stoker's vampire and Lombroso's criminal (1997).

defeat in order to preserve the biological health of the nation.

In Stoker's novel, the process of evaluating an individual's moral character by examining his or her physiognomy and mental physiology informs the perspective of the novel's narrators, acting as a scientific resource available to individuals with adequately trained eyes. In particular, there are two men of science in *Dracula* who frequently draw on theories of criminal anthropology as they attempt to identify the Count, understand his motives and predict his actions: Professor Van Helsing, who "revolutionized therapeutics by his discovery of the continuous evolution of brain-matter" and Dr. Seward, a "humanitarian and medico jurist as well as scientist" (283). Ultimately, it is the 'modern' knowledge of criminological theory, combined with old-world myths, which allows the men to kill Dracula and stop the spread of vampirism among England's population. In a passage that parallels the language of the many doctors and scientists quoted by Ellis in his study of criminology, Van Helsing uses Dracula's classification as a criminal to understand the Count's motives:

> There is this particularity in criminals. It is so constant, in all countries and at all times, that even police, who know not much from philosophy, come to know it empirically, that *it is*. . . .The criminal always work at one crime--that is the true criminal who seems predestinate to crime, and who will of none other. This criminal has not full man-brain. He is clever and cunning and resourceful; but he be not of man-stature as to brain. He be of child-brain in much. Now this criminal of ours is predestinate to crime also; he, too, have child-brain, and it is of the child to do what he have done. (382)

The tracking of the vampire, then, is serious work to be undertaken by trained professionals using a methodological approach informed by scientific knowledge. Although David Glover claims that Van Helsing is the "uncompromising authority of the

Although David Glover claims that Van Helsing is the "uncompromising authority of the scientific voice and is therefore the *man* best fitted to lead the struggle against Count Dracula," it is in fact Mina Harker who provides the most thorough and scientific description of the Count's criminal disposition (*my emphasis* 63).

Although Van Helsing claims that Mina Harker would not be familiar with criminal philosophy, as "crime touch [her] not--not but once," it is Mina Harker who makes direct use of scientific discourse by citing two of the period's most prominent criminologists, hence providing a detailed analysis of how a criminal's nature will impact the Count's behavior and the process of conquering him (382):

> The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him and *quâ* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind. Thus, in a difficulty he has to seek resource in habit. His past is a clue, and the one page of it that we know, and that from his own lips--tells that once before, when in what Mr Morris would call a 'tight place,' he went back to his own country from the land he had tried to invade, and thence, without losing purposes, prepared himself for a new effort. He came again better equipped for his work; and won. So he came to London to invade a new land. He was beaten, and when all hope of success was lost, and his existence in danger, he fled back over the sea to his home. . . as he is criminal he is selfish; and as his intellect is small and his action is based on selfishness, he confines himself to one purpose. That purpose is remorseless. As he fled back over the Danube, leaving his forces to be cut to pieces, so now he is intent on being safe, careless of all. So his own selfishness frees my soul somewhat from the terrible power which he acquired over me on that dreadful night . . . My soul is freer than it has been since that awful hour; and all that haunts me is a fear lest in some trance or dream he may have used my knowledge for his ends. (383, 384)

While Mina Harker comments on the construction of Dracula's criminal mind in much the same way that Van Helsing did earlier in the text, she provides a more useful analysis than that of the 'dry man of science.' She expresses a strong understanding of Lombroso and Nordau's writings and is able to provide a precise description of the Count's criminal

behavior and an accurate prediction of the impact that this behavior will have on their quest; unlike Van Helsing and Dr. Seward, Mina Harker expresses an awareness of her own culpability--that within her lies Lombroso's 'innocuous semi-criminal' who Dracula can employ in his criminal crusade. It is also Mina Harker who is able to judge the face of Van Helsing and place his physiognomy in direct opposition to that of the Count:

> he came towards me; a man of medium height, strongly built, with his shoulders set back over a broad, deep chest and a neck well balanced on the trunk as the head is on the neck. The poise of the head strikes me at once as indicative of thought and power; the head is noble, well-sized, broad, and large behind the ears. The face, clean-shaven, shows a hard, square chin, a large resolute, mobile mouth, a good-sized nose, rather straight, but with quick, sensitive nostrils, that seem to broaden as the big bushy brows come down and the mouth tightens. The forehead is broad and fine, rising at first almost straight and then sloping back above two bumps or ridges wide apart; such a forehead that the reddish hair cannot possibly tumble over it, but falls naturally back and to the sides. Big, dark blue eyes are set widely apart, and are quick and tender or stern with the man's mood. (219)

In that she is well-versed in a scientific discourse that few women of her time would have been familiar with, and she is able to cite two of the period's most well-known criminal anthropologists, Mina Harker plays a vital role in the tracking of the degenerate vampire and is aligned, if only temporarily, with the knowledgeable men of science. As Van Helsing explains, "it is due to [Mina's] energy and brains and foresight that the whole story is put together in such a way that every point tells" (287).

While many critics have profiled the parallels between the Lombrosian criminal and *Dracula*'s male 'monsters,' none have fully investigated the role that the language of *female* criminality plays in the characterization of *Dracula*'s women and the author's position on the changing status of women. Although she proved to be as elusive as the

male criminal, Lombroso and his followers developed an equally problematic, yet distinct, method of identifying the female offender. And yet, most critics rely only on the information in *Criminal Man* when examining Stoker's use of Lombrosian discourses and his creation of deviant criminal bodies. Rather than catalogue the physical and physiological signs of criminality in Lucy, Mina and the three vampire women using Lombroso's male model, I would like to suggest that Stoker's portrayal of deviant women relies on concepts specific to discourses of female criminality and degeneration. In that most critics rely on theories of masculine criminality when analyzing Stoker's text, and because *Dracula*'s women mirror the elusive female offender of Lombrosian criminal typology, critics often fail to recognize the signs of a distinctly female 'criminal personality' in Stoker's depiction of women and their vampiric tendencies. While Dracula's atavistic physiognomy and Renfield's psychoses quite clearly parallel symptoms found in Lombroso's incurable criminal, the representation of *Dracula*'s women is derived from a language of female criminality and deviance influenced by the rapidly changing status of turn-of-the-century women.

In Stoker's novel, the fear of Dracula's invading foreign body, along with the Count's disconcerting ability to enlist the atavistic bodies of England's women, place the concerns of social degeneration, and the role that women may play in that process, at the forefront of the narrative. Professor Van Helsing explains that even individuals who are seemingly 'holy and good' are not immune to vampiric degeneration as traces of the vampire are found in all good things: "it is not the least of its terrors that this evil thing is rooted deep in all good; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest" (280). As Ernest

Fontana explains,

> Dracula selects as his victims those persons among the more evolved race who are, unknown to themselves, kindred to him: that is, who contain the innate biological and psychological potential of savage reversion. Dracula is a threat to societies of predominantly morally and socially evolved humanity, because there survives within these societies, even in England, a minority of potentially 'diseased' individuals who are driven, subconsciously, to a reversion back to the atavistic, pre-civilized world. (160)

According to Fontana, Renfield, Mina Harker and Lucy all exhibit physical and psychological traits characteristic of Lombroso's born criminal--zoophagous tendencies, epileptic fits, somnambulism, hysteria and hypnotic trances--which allow them to act as a savage welcoming committee that subconsciously invites Dracula into the country and encourages his vampiric attacks (Fontana 160-63). In that he can release the atavistic and evil tendencies rooted in seemingly virtuous individuals, Dracula threatens to conquer not merely England, but the entire race of evolving humanity. Although I agree that the "conduct of the patient Renfield," as a fellow criminal, acts as a "sort of index to the coming and going of the Count," and that both men clearly exhibit qualities of the born male criminal, the characterization of vampire women, and the relationship between Count Dracula and the innocuous demi-criminals that are *Dracula's* women, reflect the precepts of a different branch of criminological study--female criminality (Stoker 263-4).

After carrying out several studies of female offenders--calculating the average size of brains and appendages, and comparing lists of facial characteristics and personality traits--criminal anthropologists failed to uncover an easily legible female 'criminal' body. Lombroso states that the first thing to observe in the study of the female offender is "the absence of any characteristics or features denoting degeneration . . . 54

percent of female offenders are absolutely normal in these respects, and even as regards the special senses" (*FO* 192). Lombroso explains that while male offenders display numerous anomalies that distinguish them from normal men, "it is contestable that female offenders seem almost normal when compared to the male criminal, with his wealth of anomalous features" (*FO* 151). As a result, Lombroso and his contemporary criminologists constructed a portrait of the female offender that relied heavily on 'unfeminine' physical characteristics and behaviors, suggesting that the criminal woman is not really a woman at all:

> the moral physiognomy of the born female criminal approximates strongly that of the male. The atavistic diminution of secondary sexual characters which is to be observed in the anthropology of the subject, shows itself once again in the psychology of the female criminal, who is excessively erotic, weak in maternal feeling, inclined to dissipation, astute and audacious, and dominates weaker beings sometimes by suggestion, at others by muscular force; while her love of violent exercise, her vices, and even her dress, increase her resemblance to the sterner sex. Added to these virile characteristics are often the worst qualities of women; namely, an excessive desire for revenge, cunning, cruelty, love of dress, and an untruthfulness, forming a combination of evil tendencies that often results in a type of extraordinary wickedness. (*FO* 187-188)

In constructing such a fine line between female deviance and female propriety, criminological discourses characterized all women, regardless of criminal status, with powers of deception, and deviance. By insisting that the criminal woman and the 'normal' woman exhibited deceptively similar physical and psychical characteristics, which often made it extremely difficult to tell the two types of women apart, Lombrosian discourses effectively criminalised the entire sex.

In addition, criminologists concocted a variety of theories to explain the female offender's relatively pleasant appearance. Lombroso insisted that all women possess

latent criminal natures, thus using the concept of an "innocuous demi-criminal present in the normal woman" to explain the similarities between the moral woman and the female offender (*FO* 151). Rather than use these findings to challenge his criminological precepts, Lombroso interpreted the lack of physical stigmata among female offenders as a reason to suspect all women of criminal behavior: "On the whole, the female is a kind of occasional criminal, presenting few characteristics of degeneration, little dullness, &c., but tending to multiply in proportion to her opportunities for evil-doing" (*FO* 111). In *The Female Offender*, Lombroso states that, while they commit fewer criminal acts, all women possess a 'naturally' criminal nature that will surface if given sufficient opportunity. Even without committing criminal acts, the woman's atavistic origins, 'naturally' deviant nature and inborn criminal characteristics assign her the identity of a criminal. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes a parallel process whereby the nineteenth-century homosexual is constructed as a deviant "species" from a "new specification of individuals" and an "incorporation of perversions" (42-42). Just as the nineteenth-century homosexual's sexuality was "written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away . . . less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature," the discourses on female deviance insisted that criminality was written on the woman's body (Foucault 43).

Many criminal anthropologists also argued that the lack of a degenerative stamp reflected a need for women, even among female offenders, to remain attractive to men: "The only anomalies which prevail are such as form no obstacle to sexual selection, either because the male finds them convenient for other reasons, or has no objection to

them, or attaches no importance to them" (Lombroso, *FO* 110). Rather than deny the existence of a legible criminal type among women, Lombroso suggests that the typical female offender cloaks her atavistic origins under the guises of youth, precocity and the art of making up: "the art of making up . . . disguises or hides many characteristic features which criminals exhibit openly. And it may happen, therefore, that we are only permitted to see abundant hair, black eyes, and absence of wrinkles, where acquaintance with reality would reveal the exact opposite" (101). Unlike the Count, who is easily identified as a *born* criminal, marked with the monstrous instincts of primitive humanity and the physiognomy of an inferior animal, the born *female* criminal type is less physically repulsive than the male criminal and more elusively like the occasional offender male counterpart:

> It is the *occasional* offender whom we meet with most frequently among women; and as occasional criminals have no special physiognomy, they can offer no examples of the type. And woman's inability in this respect is all the greater that even when a *born* offender she is, in the majority of cases, an adulteress, a calumniator, a swindler, or a mere accomplice--offences, every one of them, which require an attractive appearance, and prohibit the development of repulsive facial characteristics. (Stoker 110)

Whereas Lombroso found it easy to distinguish the born male criminal from the occasional male criminal based on his obvious physical anomalies, the woman criminal is unable to offer up such easily recognizable symptoms of deviance and abnormality. In fact, the criminal woman often relies on her attractiveness to achieve her criminal goals. As Lombroso explains, "[w]here delicacy of mien and a benevolent expression are useful, however, we find them--a truly Darwinian trait" (*FO* 102). And just as several of *Dracula's* women first appear as honorable, virtuous and beautiful, their deviant behavior

soon destroys the façade of beauty: "although handsome at first sight, she presents, nevertheless, all the features which I consider typically criminal: immensely thick, black hair, a receding forehead, overjutting brows, and an exaggerated frontal angle, such as one notes in savages and monkeys" (*FO* 95).

Just as Lombroso's female delinquent uses delicacy and beauty to achieve her criminal goals, Stoker's women appear most beautiful, and most in need of masculine protection, when they are about to commit a criminal offense. Jonathan Harker's description of the three vampire women signals Stoker's first borrowing from the criminological conception of the female offender. Although he is approached by three female vampires, only two are marked with the physical signs that suggest the criminal type: "Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count, and great dark, piercing eyes" (Stoker 69). In contrast, the third woman is described in favorable terms that set her apart from her weird sisters: "The other was fair, as fair can be, with great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear" (69). Because this woman is just starting out in the vampire profession--the narrative implies that Jonathan will be her first adult male victim--Jonathan finds her quite beautiful at first glance. According to Lombroso, Jonathan's response to the young and beautiful vampire represents a standard 'technique' used by the female offender: "let a female delinquent be young and we can overlook her degenerate type, and even regard her as beautiful; the sexual instinct misleading us here as it does in making us attribute to women more of sensitiveness and passion than they really possess" (*FO* 97). Even though she begins her vampire crusade

by luring away and attacking children rather than full-grown men[4], Lucy uses deceptive beauty and a supernaturally magnetic power of attraction to entice the children to go away with her. In playing a popular game that strives to imitate the attack of the 'Bloofer Lady', the children insist on using techniques that parallel those of Lombroso's female criminal, "luring each other away by wiles" and trying to be as "winningly attractive" as the popular stage actress Ellen Terry (Stoker 214).

When Van Helsing encounters the vampire women later in the narrative, he also struggles against the women's radiant beauty and the 'natural' instinct of man to protect the female sex:

> So I search, and search, and I find one of them. She lay in her Vampire sleep, so fill of life and voluptuous beauty that I shudder as though I have come to do murder. Ah, I doubt not that in the old time, when such things were, many a man who set forth to do such a task as mine, found at the last his heart fail him, and then his nerve. So he delay, and delay, and delay, till the mere beauty and fascination of the wanton Un-Dead have hypnotize him; and he remain on and on, till sunset come, and the Vampire sleep be over. Then the beautiful eyes of the fair woman open and look love, and the voluptuous mouth present to a kiss--and man is weak. And there remain one more victim in the Vampire fold; one more to swell the grim and grisly ranks of the Un-Dead! (Stoker 410-11)

According to Lombroso, the *beauté du diable*, or the ability to deceive the male with beauty, is a common skill possessed by women criminals: "true female criminals are much less ugly than their male companions, we have in prostitutes women of great youth, in whom the *beauté du diable*, with its freshness, plumpness, and absence of wrinkles, disguises and conceals the betraying anomalies" (*FO* 101). Just as the criminal woman is able to commit her crimes through deception and the manipulation of her physical beauty,

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[4] While it is never stated outright that Lucy attacks only young boys, and her victims are often designated by the pronoun "it," all of Lucy's child-victims are eventually addressed with male pronouns. Just like the other vampire women in the novel, Lucy refrains from attacking women and girls. (See pages 214, 215, 233, 237, 249, and 251).

the vampire woman uses her 'supernatural' powers to cause men to lose the ability to reason and make intelligent decisions. In *Dracula*, and in criminological discourses, the female offender contaminates the pure and sacred image of an ideal femininity; her transgression of the boundary between the good woman and evil woman, and the resulting realization that all women embody elements of criminality, represents the ultimate horror that Harker and Van Helsing have to face. In fact, Van Helsing's recognition of a woman's ability to deceive and corrupt men horrifies the professor and brings him to hysterics:

> Oh, it was the grim irony of it all--this so lovely lady garlanded with flowers, that looked so fair as life, till one by one we wondered if she were truly dead; she laid in that so fine marble house in that lonely churchyard, where rest so many of her kin, laid there with the mother who loved her, and whom she loved; and that sacred bell going 'Toll! Toll! Toll!' so sad and slow; and those holy men, with the white garments of the angel, pretending to read books, and yet all the time their eyes never on the page; and all of us with bowed head . . . Said [Arthur] not that the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride? . . . If so that, then what about the others? Ho, ho! Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by Church's law, though no wits, all gone--even I, who am faithful husband to this now-no-wife, am bigamist. (Stoker 212-213)

In that men often find it impossible to distinguish between good and evil women, Stoker's deviant women, by revealing the criminal nature in all women, expose the lack of a boundary between the feminine ideal and the feminine nightmare. The seductiveness of powerful women is mesmerising but also frightening because of the unspoken notions that such power is won at the expense of men, and that powerful women consume and destroy.

Just as Lombroso could have predicted that Harker and Van Helsing would be

Just as Lombroso could have predicted that Harker and Van Helsing would be initially misled by the beautiful vampires, the criminologist also would have expected Harker to be familiar with the female offender's face. While the men in Stoker's novel always retain identities that are distinct from each other, and from that of the Count, the women in *Dracula* often become indistinguishable from one another, blending into one unrecognizable vampire mass. As Alexandra Keller explains, the nineteenth-century woman was often associated with mass culture while real, authentic culture remained the prerogative of men:

> mass culture was subordinate, inferior, dangerous, needing to be contained and controlled but, paradoxically ungovernable and, essentially, unknowable. Men were represented as entities separate from each other by a space each commanded . . . Men were seen as *representable* in a way that women were not. (174).

And while all women were seen as part of an ungovernable 'mass,' according to criminological discourses, female offenders in particular, shared an elusive commonality of appearance, specifically among women who commit similar offenses; they are "like members of the same family" or sisters: "All have the same repulsive, virile air, the same big, sensual lips" (Lombroso, *FO* 94). Once Jonathan is released from the grasp of the fair vampire, his description of the women, three "dim, shadowy forms" fighting over their dreadful lunch, acknowledges a commonality of appearance and purpose among the offenders:

> *one* of them, with a low laugh. . . pointed to the bag [Dracula] had thrown upon the floor. . . *One* of the women jumped forward and opened it. . . The women closed round, whilst I was aghast with horror; but as I looked, they disappeared, and with them the dreadful bag. (Stoker 71 *my emphasis*)

Thus the "dreamy fear" that arises from Harker's encounter with the seductive vampires

stems from the realization that these criminal offenders are capable of looking remarkably like any other woman, including his beautiful wife. In fact, Jonathan attempts to dispel this fear by reinforcing the distinction between Mina Harker and "those awful women. Faugh! Mina Harker is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit!" (85). Even more horrifying to Harker than the personal danger he faces at the hands of the vampire women is the connection he makes between their behavior and that of his wife; he is horrified by the possibility that even the virtuous and sexless Mina Harker is potentially a desire-driven vampire.

In Lucy Westenra, Stoker incorporates components of criminological analysis that reflect a fear of the sexually deviant woman, popular turn-of-the-century anxieties over the New Woman and changes to acceptable standards of female sexuality. When writing to Mina Harker about having received three proposals of marriage in one day, Lucy challenges conventional feminine behavior by asking a rather shocking question: "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (91). While Mina Harker makes several disparaging references to the behavior of the New Woman elsewhere in the novel, she fails to notice that this comment associates Lucy with the New Woman through her sexual assertiveness. As Judith Weissman explains, the intended meaning of this passage is that Lucy "would like to be kind to these three fine men who love her; the implicit meaning is that she feels able to handle three men sexually" (74). In imagining opportunities for sexual promiscuity and polygamy, Lucy also expresses interest in a common criminal pleasure: the criminal's "craving for excitement, for intoxication, for uproar, finds its chief satisfaction in the love of orgy . . .

that is the criminal's most sacred festival" (Ellis, *C* 170). Lucy's unconventional comments on marriage and sexual relationships suggests an identity that turn-of-the-century criminologists viewed as indicative of all women's latent criminal nature. Criminologists believed that if intensely erotic tendencies and sensuality were allowed to develop in women, an interest in sex would "absorb the mental activity of a woman, and, by rendering her selfish, destroy the spirit of self-abnegation inseparable from the maternal function," thus making her susceptible to criminal degeneration (Lombroso, *FO* 153). Although she becomes even more sexually aggressive after her vampiric transformation, Lucy's flirtatious behavior suggests a long-standing tendency to undermine conventionally passive femininity, thus revealing a barely repressed sexual promiscuity, one that is only unleashed, not produced, by Lucy's encounters with Dracula.

Once Lucy's vampiric tendencies begin to surface, the parallels between the previously honorable woman and the common criminal become even more apparent. Once she turns vampiric, the men's confusion is conveyed in the contradictory terms used to describe Lucy. Although the men insist that the woman vampire retains Lucy's original shape and features, her body is also described using the virile and unappealing qualities of the female criminal: she is a "dark-haired woman . . . "a nightmare of Lucy, . . .the pointed teeth, the bloodstained, voluptuous mouth . . . the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity" (Stoker 252). When Dr. Seward is left alone to monitor Lucy Westenra's condition, with the expectation that he will pass on any change in her condition to Van Helsing, Seward

records the information in much the same way that he records the condition of his criminally insane patient, Renfield. He sends a telegram to Van Helsing saying "4 September.--Patient still better today . . . Patient greatly improved. Good appetite; sleeps naturally: good spirits; colour coming back" (152-3). As these telegrams come directly after a lengthy description of the relative improvements in Renfield's condition, it is unclear which patient the Doctor is describing. By comparing the condition of the two patients and using indefinite pronouns that make it difficult to discern when he is talking about Lucy and when Renfield, Lucy, a woman he once hoped to marry, becomes just another criminal 'patient.'

The physical and moral degeneration of Lucy Westenra also reflects one of the most threatening characteristics of female criminality--a lack of maternal spirit. Like the criminal woman, the vampire woman poses a threat to the masculine order in that she is a menace to the domestic order and long-standing rules of sexual propriety. For Lombroso, rejections of domesticity and maternity are steps that precipitate the 'normal' woman's slide into criminality:

> when piety and maternal sentiments are wanting, and in their place are strong passions and intensely erotic tendencies, much muscular strength and a superior intelligence for the conception and execution of evil, it is clear that the innocuous semi-criminal present in the normal woman must be transformed into a born criminal more terrible than any man (*FO* 151).

As Glennis Byron explains, "Female vampires clearly represent a rejection of maternity in their preference not for feeding but rather feeding *on* the child; they savagely reject the woman's central role as mother and caregiver" (17). Unlike Dracula, who threatens every woman he comes in contact with, the vampire woman's powers are limited to harming

children; her threat resides in a tendency to commit unnatural, unmotherly acts. The men who know Lucy are shocked to see a woman, who should fit into the stereotype of 'nurturer' acting in such a devious and predatory manner toward children. In this passage, the men are horrified by Lucy's lack of maternal instincts as she tosses her latest victim, a child, to the ground:

> With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone . . . There was a cold-boldness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur; when she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wanton smile, he fell back and hid his face in his hands. (Stoker 249)

In that the gentle and sweet Lucy Westenra becomes a predator of children, a wanton "nightmare of Lucy," and the fair and beautiful woman of Dracula's castle becomes a dark, blood-thirsty creature that feasts on infants, Stoker's female vampires represent nightmarish versions of women the men have known. As Judith Weissman explains, Dracula's vampire women open up " the possibility that the chaste Victorian wife will become the kind of woman that her husband both desires and fears" (75).

Although Lucy Westenra and Dracula's three vampire women reflect many of the characteristics associated with the female delinquent, it is in the character of Mina Harker, a seemingly idealistic and moral woman who becomes increasingly 'primitive' and criminal, that Stoker fully explores the dangerous implications of feminine degeneration. After she is attacked by the Count, in what many critics describe as a symbolic marriage or sexual union, Van Helsing brands Mina's forehead with the Sacred Wafer, thus furnishing the woman with the first physical mark of degeneracy--a mark that will be used to gage her increasing moral decline and her final recovery of virtue. As

Fontana points out, this image parallels the common practice among Lombrosian criminals whereby they "[brand] their sweethearts on the face, not from motives of revenge, but as a sign of proprietorship" (Fontana 161). While this interpretation suggests that Mina's tattoo is a symbol of Dracula's ownership, it is in fact, the scientist, rather than the criminal, who brands Mina Harker and designates the scar as a mark of degeneracy in a move that parallels the criminologist's use of subjective descriptions to brand criminal bodies with degenerative meaning. Because Van Helsing recognizes the need to track Mina Harker's degenerative slide, and his study of criminology has taught him that the female offender is more difficult to identify, he brands her with a mark that will read like a litmus test of Mina Harker's declining morality. Because theories of degeneration insist that the face is an essential indicator of personal virtue, intelligence and honor, Mina Harker cannot be read as a fully moral woman until this mark of degeneracy is removed.

Although this mark of proprietorship disappears with the death of Dracula, Mina Harker exhibits many other complex symptoms of criminality and degeneracy before the novel reaches its happy resolution. After Van Helsing brands her, Mina begins exhibiting physical characteristics that parallel the Lombrosian female delinquent, including a forehead " puckered up into little wrinkles, as though she thinks even in her sleep," lips that were drawn away, "showing her teeth in somewhat of prominence" and a pallor that "grew whiter and ever whiter till the snow was not more pale" (Stoker 307, 334, 406). According to Lombroso, premature wrinkles on the forehead and around the eyes, which recall the "proverbial wrinkles of witches," prominent teeth, and "a livid pallor" are more common among criminal women (*FO* 72). Just as Lombroso attempted to track the

physical and psychical stigmata of degeneracy found in women offenders, Van Helsing uses his 'scientifically' trained eye to catalogue the stigmata reflected in the body and behavior of Mina Harker:

> I can see the characteristics of the vampire coming in her face. It is now but very, very slight; but it is to be seen if we have eyes to notice without to prejudge. Her teeth are some sharper, and at times her eyes are more hard. But these are not all, there is to her the silence now often; as so it was with Miss Lucy. She did not speak, even when she wrote that which she wished to be known later. (Stoker 363)

Rather than immediately labeling Mina Harker an incurable offender, Van Helsing relies on his knowledge of criminological theories, which will allow him to track the progress of her moral and physical degeneration. As Dr. Seward explains, if the atavistic indicators become too pronounced, it will be necessary to destroy Mina Harker: "Van Helsing examines, he tells me, her teeth very carefully, whilst she is in the hypnotic condition, for he says that so long as they do not begin to sharpen there is no active danger of a change in her. If this change should come, it would be necessary to take steps! . ." (377). In looking for the same signs of predatory reversion that marked Lucy's irreversible slide into criminality in Mina Harker, the men appear ready to accept the possibility that even the once fair and virtuous Mina Harker may degenerate into a criminal state and have to be destroyed.

Just as Van Helsing and Dr. Seward catalogue the degeneration of Mina Harker's physical body, the scientists also track the psychic signs that indicate the reproduction of the atavistic condition of the primitive woman. In Mina Harker, Stoker presents the myriad possibilities of female degeneracy by blending together the psychological symptoms of several different types of Lombrosian female offenders. First of all, she

exhibits the overactive imagination, tendency toward exaggeration and a "mania for lying" found in many descriptions of criminal hysterics (Lombroso, *FO* 223). For Van Helsing and his men, this characteristic presents a serious threat to their attempt to rid England of the Count's influence: "it seems that [Mina's] imagination is beginning to work. Whilst she has been in a trance hitherto she has confined herself to the simplest facts. If this goes on it may ultimately mislead us" (Stoker 386-7). Not only do these fits of imaginative speculation indicate the decay of Mina Harker's moral fiber, they present a serious threat to the men in the novel. Previous to this moment, the men have relied on Mina Harker's ability to transcribe facts without embellishment and provide information that proved vital to the tracking of the Count. According to Lombroso, these characteristics often cause the criminal to bear false witness and "stir up law and authority" (*FO* 219). In addition, while both the hysterical criminal and the occasional offender will become "obedient automatons" when hypnotized, the born criminal has the unique ability to resist the process of hypnosis (220). Van Helsing is confronted with this ability when he places Mina Harker in a trance, hoping that she will divulge the whereabouts of the Count:

> I fear that in some mysterious way poor Mrs Harker's tongue is tied. I know that she forms conclusions of her own, and from all that has been I can guess brilliant and how true they must be; but she will not, or cannot, give them utterance. ... I suppose it is some of that horrid poison which has got into her veins beginning to work. The Count had his own purposes when he gave her what Van Helsing called 'the Vampire's baptism of blood.' (Stoker 362)

In that Mina Harker becomes increasingly resistant to Van Helsing's hypnosis as she moves into a more advanced stage of degeneration, she reveals her status as the most dangerous of all Lombrosian criminals--the born *female* offender.

Her tendency toward epileptic fits represents another point of conversion between Mina Harker and Lombroso's born female offender. Dr. Seward remarks on the lack of control the men have over Mina when she falls into such a state. "She stopped and a shudder ran through her, increasing in intensity for a few seconds, till, at the end, she shook as though in a palsy. She said no more, even in answer to the Professor's imperative questioning" (387). In his descriptions of criminal female 'lunatics', Lombroso notes, "where a woman is a born criminal, I have always discovered in her as in her male prototype the symptoms of an epileptic tendency; and naturally these are the more marked the graver the offense" (*FO* 302). After considering the various signs of Mina Harker's degeneration, and the damage that she could inflict on their campaign against Dracula, Van Helsing insists on limiting the woman's access to information: "I must tell her that for reason which we will not to speak she must not more be of our council, but be simply guarded by us." (Stoker 364). As she begins to use her knowledge to deceive the men around her, Van Helsing regrets his decision to align her with the men in the novel and makes the decision to limit Mina Harker's access to information, thus relegating her to a very limiting 'feminine' position, that of guarded property.

In another exchange that reflects the extent of her atavistic slide, Mina Harker approaches her husband with a 'virile' aggression and 'mannish' assertiveness characteristic of the female offender who commits crimes of passion:

> When she raised it, his white night robe was stained with blood where her lips had touched, and where the thin open wound in her neck had sent forth drops. The instant she saw it she drew back, with a low wail, and whispered, amidst choking sobs:-
>
> 'Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear.' (324)

As she gradually falls down the slippery slope into criminality and degeneration, Mina Harker, who always "tried to walk in meekness and righteousness," finds herself mimicking the motions of the Count by putting her lips to Jonathan's breast and leaving drops of blood on his white robe, just as the Count had left drops of blood on Mina Harker's white gown. Whereas Fontana states that "Stoker departs finally from Lombroso in his portrayal of Mina" in fact, the ending of Stoker's novel and his depiction of Mina concludes with the reinforcement of what Lombroso saw as the best way to stop female criminality, if only temporarily--a reassertion of traditional gender roles and motherhood (Fontana 163).

In both Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, Stoker reveals how women's latent criminality can lead to social degeneration. Not unlike the Lombrosian criminal woman, the female vampire is a fictional female figure who stimulates male sexual anxieties and brings moral degeneration, or even death, to the male protagonists. Judith Weissman explains, "as the women in Dracula become vampires, they become too sexual for their husbands or fiancés to endure" (75). Although Lucy, Mina and the 'sister-brides' of Castle Dracula prowl exclusively, albeit ineffectively, in pursuit of men, their unwillingness to harm fellow women and their sexual aggressiveness suggest the possibility of another kind of social degeneration being explored at the turn of the century--the potential for a 'reversal' of standard sex roles. In *Dracula*, the behavior of women precipitates a disconcerting confusion of gender roles by rejecting traditional 'female' passivity and exhibiting 'masculine' activity, thus reflecting characteristics of the criminal woman and the female sexual invert. When he encounters the three vampire

women, Jonathan is confused by the women's combination of 'feminine' dress and manner and 'masculine' sexual aggressiveness. As Nina Auerbach explains, Jonathan struggles with the confusion of gender categories in an "exclusively heterosexual vision of three laughing chomping women who are not only an alien species, but an alien gender" (67).

In addition to studying the easily visible appearance of deviant bodies, criminological discourses also incorporated the pseudoscience of phrenology and cranial measurement--an area where the study of the female offender again produced extremely contradictory evidence. According to Stephen Jay Gould, the process of examining the human brain was developed to prove an a priori conclusion: that size of brain records intelligence and that comfortable white males have larger brains than women, poor people and lower races. Although criminal anthropology stressed the primitive nature of the criminal and his or her similarity to primitive man and primates, "the large size of many criminal brains was a constant source of bother to craniometricians and criminal anthropologists" (Gould 126). In order to maintain the validity of criminological theories, which insisted that criminals were less evolved than moral citizens, scientists struggled to explain the existence of "large-brained" criminals and the similarities between men of 'genius' and corrupt criminals. As Gould explains, the data collectors decided that "too much of a good thing is bad for some people. Truly inspired criminality may require as much upstairs as professorial virtue" (126-7). While most anthropological studies of crime acknowledge the appearance of intelligence among offenders, the link between genius and degeneracy is explained in a manner that diffuses the disruptive potential of the criminal genius. As Havelock Ellis explains,

> The two most characteristic features in the intelligence of the average

> criminal are at first sight inconsistent. On the one hand he is stupid, inexact, lacking in forethought, astoundingly imprudent. On the other hand he is cunning, hypocritical, delighting in falsehood, even for its own sake, abounding in ruses . . . The stupidity and the cunning of the criminal are in reality closely related, and they approximate him to savages and to the lower animals. (*C* 153, 155)

Another doctor quoted by Lombroso explains, "specialists say that criminals are more astute than intelligent. But what is this astuteness? It is an instinctive, innate faculty, which does not depend on real intelligence, and which is already found precociously perfected in children, in the lowest savages, in women, and also in imbeciles" (*CM* 156). In *Dracula*, Van Helsing and his followers explain the Count's cunning 'intelligence' using the circular arguments common to turn-of-the-century criminological discourses. In that he exhibits primitive characteristics, and yet still manages to outsmart them at every turn, Van Helsing uses the language of criminology to provide a reassuringly "logical" frame that serves to dilute Dracula's aptitudes. While the Count may appear to be very smart, like most criminals, Dracula's intelligence is a very primitive one and the professor explains repeatedly that the vampire in fact possesses a "child-mind" or a "child-brain."

In particular, many criminologists spent a great deal of energy proving that men's brains were bigger and better than women's brains. For example, one of the most well-respected studies published by the renowned masters of craniometry, Paul Broca, outlined the differences between men and women, and in the year of Broca's death, T. Bischoff published his study on the brains of 119 assassins, murderers, and thieves, concluding that:

> Their average exceeded the mean of honest men by 11 grams, while 14 of them topped 1,500 grams, and 5 exceeded 1,600 grams, while the assassin

> Le Pelley, at 1,808 grams, must have given pause to the shades of Cuvier. The largest female brain ever weighed (1,565 grams) belonged to a woman who had killed her husband. (Gould 126)

While the fact that criminals' brains often outweighed the brains of honest men would appear to suggest that the criminal was more developed than criminologists had originally suspected, this evidence was actually used to substantiate the criminal's inferior position on the evolutionary scale. For women, the evidence was even more telling. In studying the brains of men, cranometricians discovered many honest and intelligent men with large brains; in studying women, only female criminals and deviants appeared to have brains that compared in size to those of the men. Just as a person who behaved in an unusual or eccentric manner was understood to be exhibiting stigmata, the intelligent woman was labeled an anomaly--one that threatened social progress:

> all women who are truly famous and are of conspicuous mental ability, to the first glance of an expert, reveal some of the anatomical characters of the male, some external body resemblance to a man. Those so-called 'women' who have been held up to admiration in the past and present, by the advocates of woman's rights, as examples of what women can do, have almost invariably been what I have described as sexually intermediate forms. The very first of the historical examples, Sappho herself, has been handed down to us as an example of the sexual invert, and from her name has been derived the accepted terms for perverted sexual relations between women. (Weininger 65)

Whereas the large-brained man could fall into one of two categories--the genius or the criminal--the large-brained female could only be assigned a criminal or deviant identity:

> All psychologists who have studied the intelligence of women, as well as poets and novelists, recognize today that they represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man. They excel in fickleness, inconstancy, absence of thought and logic, and incapacity to reason. Without a doubt there exist some distinguished women, very superior to the average man, but they are as exceptional as the birth of any monstrosity, as, for example, of a gorilla with two heads; consequently, we may neglect them entirely.

(Le Bon as quoted in *Mismeasure of Man* 136-7)

Just as female criminals are portrayed as a rare yet extremely dangerous species, the intelligent woman was seen as a 'species' as rare as a gorilla with two heads, and, thanks in large part to evolutionary discourses, this rarity quickly translated into abnormality. Most proponents of degeneration discourses saw the exceptional woman, whether she were a genius, a criminal, or a sexual invert, as a type of monstrosity.

In 1897, the same year that *Dracula* first appeared, Havelock Ellis also published *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*: a groundbreaking treatise that investigated another hot topic among social scientists of the 1890s--human sex-roles and homosexuality. Although Ellis insisted that the sexual invert possessed a weaker genetic make-up, thus making him or her unsuitable for generating future populations, he saw the homosexual as a legitimate, and often gifted, citizen who could make important contributions to society. Whereas Ellis employed the precepts of biological determinism to argue for the rights of the "congenital sexual invert" as an anomaly of nature whereby the "sexual impulse is organically and innately turned toward individuals of the same sex," many criminal anthropologists, including Lombroso, used the same theories to classify the sexual invert as a class of "born" criminal--another atavistic "monster" threatening social progress and the advancement of the race (Ellis, *SPS* 4). Just as Lombroso compares criminality to a spreading disease infecting urban centres, he depicts homosexuality as a social contagion, recommending two kinds of punishment necessary to stop the spread of homosexual 'offences': a "conditional punishment" for the occasional offender whose crime was induced by circumstance, and complete confinement for the born homosexual offender:

> homo-sexual offenders who are born such, and manifest their evil propensities from childhood without being determined by special causes . . . should be confined from their youth, for they are a source of contagion and cause for a great number of occasional *criminals*. (Lombroso *CCR*. 418 *my emphasis*)

According to Lombroso, homosexuality, as a type of human degeneration that spreads criminal behavior among otherwise law-abiding citizens, represents a particularly heinous "criminal" act. Whereas the notion that an individual is predisposed to homosexual behavior by innate physical and psychical qualities would logically suggest that he or she should not be punished for this 'natural' behavior, Lombroso insists on harsher punishment for the born homosexual criminal because he or she endangers the general population and can encourage law-abiding citizens to replicate criminal behavior.

Although Lombroso and Ellis postulate very different solutions to the homosexual 'problem' and the diffusion of crime, both criminological and sexological discourses attempt to catalogue the anatomical signs of deviant bodies, manipulating physical evidence to identify certain individuals as arrested in their development and biologically predisposed to criminal and/or aberrant behavior. Their respective studies suggest that the conceptual resources for understanding the marks and mainsprings of sexual difference were undergoing a decisive shift; 'feminine' identity, in particular, appears as a concept that is being dramatically reassigned and reoccupied. In the varied and variable proliferation of turn-of-the-century books and periodicals on woman's emancipation, the production of new sexual identities was often an issue. Whether portraying the suffragette, the woman criminal or the female sexual invert, turn-of-the-century authors and artists often depicted these 'deviant' women as mannish types, incorporating many

male characteristics, both physical and psychical. Many late Victorian political cartoons portrayed the New Woman as a mannishly absurd kind of gender-hybrid. In depicting her foolish attempt to challenge gender roles, cartoonists portrayed a woman who ignored her housekeeping duties, her children and her 'proper place' in society, who frequently wore men's clothing and often reduced her husband to an 'effeminate' slip of a man. (See figures 3, 4, and5). Although she possesses many of the qualities of an emancipated woman herself, Mina Harker mocks the New Woman for her tendency to overstep the rules of sexual propriety and her desire to usurp masculine roles: "Some of the 'New Woman' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the 'New Woman' won't condescend in the future to accept; she will do the proposing herself" (Stoker 123-124). In essence, the 'emancipated woman,' whether she be a criminal vampire or a sexual invert, constituted a 'third sex'.

In discussing the emancipation of women, many criminologists suggested that the entrance of women into wider fields of economic pursuits would lead to an increase in the number of female criminals and possibly an erasure of the sexual differential apparent in criminal statistics (Pollak 58). By encouraging women to pursue intellectual, physical and social endeavors that where not part of the traditional female role, both progressive social equalization and criminal activities encouraged women to look and act more like men. Just as the women in Stoker's novel exhibit many traditionally 'unfeminine' qualities, the extensive cataloguing of the physical and psychical indicators of female criminality and female sexual inversion render images of women with remarkably similar

physiognomies, women who deviate from the physical, sexual and behavioral components of the traditional female sex-role--women who are not really women at all.

Criminal women were often found to possess male characteristics; according to Lombroso, signs of female criminality included 'symptoms' such as a lack of distinct 'femininity,' excess virility and physical masculinity:

> the female criminal necessarily offers the two most salient characteristics of primordial woman, namely, precocity and a minor degree of differentiation from the male--this lesser differentiation manifesting itself in the stature, cranium, brain, and in the muscular strength which she possesses to a degree far in advance of the modern female (*FO* 113).

Criminologists believed that this excess masculinity suppressed female maternal drives, the 'feminine' quality that was most likely to keep female criminal instincts at bay, and induced even greater criminality than in men. In their studies of deviant women, both Lombroso and Ellis express a common concern with the role women play in racial degeneration and the quality of the future population, claiming social order and productivity are threatened when women become dangerously proximal to men in terms of appearance and action, behavior and intellect.

In *The Female Offender*, Lombroso describes the woman criminal as having a physical character "peculiar to the male born criminal . . . In voice, structure of the pelvis, distribution of the hair, etc., she tends to resemble the opposite sex and to lose all the instincts peculiar to her own" (Lombroso, *FO* 96). Although the women photographed for *The Female Offender* display no obvious signs of masculinity, Lombroso insists on the presence of masculine qualities among female offenders: "even the handsomest female offenders have invariably strong jaws and cheek-bones, and a masculine aspect"

(102). (See figure 6). While her sketch fails to betray signs of deviance to the average reader, myself included, in studying a nine-year-old girl identified only as Louise C., Lombroso claims to find the exact type of the mannish born criminal:

> her physiognomy is Mongolian, her jaws and cheek-bones are immense; the frontal sinuses strong, the nose flat with a prognathous under-jaw, asymmetry of face, and above all, precocity and virility of expression. She looks like a grown woman--nay, a man. (99)

(See figure 7). In his studies of criminality, Havelock Ellis also notes that the criminal woman often resembles ordinary man in her physical character:

> This has always been more or less carefully recorded, both in popular proverbs and in the records of criminal trials. Thus Sarah Chesham, a notorious wholesale poisoner, who killed several children, including her own, as well as her husband, was described as 'a woman of masculine proportions;' and a girl called Bouhours, who was executed at Paris at the age of twenty-two, for murdering and robbing several men who had been her lovers, is described as of agreeable appearance, and of sweet and feminine manners, but of remarkable muscular strength; she dressed as a man; her chief pleasure was to wrestle with men, and her favorite weapon was the hammer. (*The Criminal* 264)

Just as criminal anthropologists explained female offenders' unfeminine behavior by aligning them with men, sexologists insisted that the majority of the female sexual inverts possessed many male characteristics, both physical and mental. As Ellis explains, "the commonest characteristic of the sexually inverted woman is a certain degree of masculinity or boyishness" or at least a "pronounced masculine temperament" (Ellis, *SPS* 244, 197). In fact, Ellis draws a direct parallel between the masculine nature of the female sexual invert and the female offender:

> It is well known that the part taken by women generally in open criminality, and especially in crimes of violence, is small as compared with men. In the homosexual field, as we might have anticipated, the conditions are to some extent reversed. Inverted men, in whom a more or

> less feminine temperament is so often found, are rarely impelled to acts of aggressive violence . . . Inverted women, who may retain their feminine emotionality combined with some degree of infantile impulsiveness and masculine energy, present a favorable soil for the seeds of passional crime. (201)

By suggesting that the masculine qualities of the female sexual invert predispose her to criminal behavior, Ellis substantiates a common precept of criminal anthropology whereby the equalization of the sexes, in its most extreme forms, will lead to social decay.

Although statistics showed that women committed fewer crimes than men, turn-of-the-century criminal anthropologists did fear that female criminality would continually increase until it equaled that of men. Proponents of criminal anthropology interpreted the sexual division of labour, which had evolved from the undifferentiated roles filled by primitive men and women, as a sign of social progress. These concepts encouraged the belief that the woman who rejects her 'place' and seeks equality with men is not only committing a moral offense, she is also flirting with vicious criminality. As the biologist Gustave Le Bon explained in 1879,

> the day when, misunderstanding the inferior occupation which nature has given her, women leave the home and take part in our battles; on this day a social revolution will begin, and everything that maintains the sacred ties of the family will disappear. (Gould 137)

Therefore, the suffrage movement, which encouraged increased female mobility and women's entrance into traditionally male avocations, created a potential for even further social degeneration and recognition of rights for women resulting in a dramatic increase in female participation in crime. As Lombroso explains, "criminality increases among women with the march of civilization. The female criminal is a kind of occasional

delinquent, presenting few characteristics of degeneration, little dulness, &c., but tending to multiply in proportion to her opportunities for evil-doing" (*FO* 111). In short, evolutionary theories were intent on rendering women prisoners of progress. In order to ensure the progression of the race, women needed to maintain their position within the domestic realm. Although he was a supporter of equal rights for women, Havelock Ellis also saw a correlation between women's increased mobility and the rising number of female offenders:

> where education of women is at a very low level, and the women lead a very domesticated life, the level of feminine criminality is extremely low . . . In England, on the other hand, which has taken the lead in enlarging the sphere of women's work, the level of feminine criminality has for half a century been on the rise . . . as women come to touch life at more various points, and to feel more of its stress, they will naturally develop the same tendency to criminality as exists among men. (*C* 264-265)

While Ellis also believed that women possessed an innately criminal nature, one that had only been repressed by enforced domesticity, statements such as the one quoted above also reflect Ellis' recognition of the role of social conditioning in determining criminality. According to Lombroso, eradicating criminality and deviance required the segregation of offenders from the rest of society; Ellis, on the other hand, felt that society should direct its effort, "not to the vain attempt to repress the energies of women, but to the larger task of improving the conditions of life, and so diminishing the tendency of criminality among both sexes alike" (265).

In *Dracula,* men exhibit a similar fear that the degenerate woman will precipitate widespread social degeneration and the decline of the male. As the Count's vampirism begins to affect Mina, Jonathan Harker fears that, while he recognizes the dangers of

Mina's vampirism, the 'natural' tendency of the male to protect the weaker sex will cause him to stay by Mina's side and, thus lead to his own degeneration:

> To one thing I have made up my mind; if we find out that Mina must be a vampire in the end, then she shall not go into that unknown and terrible land alone. I suppose it is thus that in old times one vampire meant many; just as their hideous bodies could only rest in sacred earth, so the holiest love was the recruiting sergeant for their ghastly ranks. (Stoker 337)

In that women threaten to reduce men to a parallel state of degeneration, Stoker emphasizes the principle role women play in spreading social disease and criminality. Whereas Dracula is the atavistic source of vampirism, the Count explains that it is the women of the novel, with their excesses in intelligence and aggressiveness, who pose the greatest threat to England's population: "Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine--my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to be fed" (347). As Ernest Fontana explains in his analysis of *Dracula*, the innate signs of criminality found in the women in the novel--Lucy's somnambulism and epilepsy and Mina's hysteria--suggest that these delinquent women provide the diseased potential that allows Dracula into the country and into their home (160). Despite the integral role that Dracula plays in unleashing the women's violent tendencies and sexual independence, it is ultimately the female vampires, as examples of women with too much sexual agency, who have the potential to precipitate widespread social decay and contamination of the English population.

In *Dracula*, just as Lucy is linked to the female offender and the 'mannish' woman through her sexual assertiveness, Mina's intellectual abilities connect her to the criminal woman and the sexual invert. In addition to her exhibition of sexual aggression, which marks the female delinquent and the female sexual invert, Mina possesses another

'masculine' attribute often found in criminological descriptions of the female offender--a large *man's* brain. Although all of *Dracula's* men recognize Mina's unusual mental abilities, Professor Van Helsing is particularly impressed by the woman's cranial abilities:

> Ah, that wonderful Madame Mina! She has man's brain--a brain that a man should have were he much gifted--and a woman's heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when he made that so good combination. (Stoker 274)

In a similar passage, Van Helsing again discusses the importance of Mina's brain after his attempts at putting her in a trance have failed. He again insists on the 'masculine' gender of Mina's brain and even disassociates it from the woman herself, as something that the men can use without Mina being directly involved:

> Here comes Madame Mina; not a word to her of her trance! She knows it not; and it would overwhelm her and make despair just when we want all her hope, all her courage; when most we want all her great brain which is trained like man's brain, but is of sweet woman and have special power which the Count give her, and which he may not take away altogether. (381)

Although Stoker's depiction of Mina's sizeable brain appears to challenge the limiting characteristics he attributes to women elsewhere in the novel, it projects another misogynist belief of degeneration discourses. As Cesare Lombroso explains,

> The occasions which present themselves to draw the naturally moral woman into crime are multiplied now by the higher education conceded to females . . . Many women of intelligence find themselves with nothing to show in return for much expense and labour. They are reduced to want while conscious of not deserving it, and being debarred from the probability of matrimony owning to the ordinary man's dislike of a well-instructed woman, they have no resource but in suicide, crime, or prostitution. (*FO* 204-5)

In that Mina's intellectual abilities are frequently compared to those of men and her large brain marks her as 'unfeminine,' criminal and monstrous, Stoker's novel suggests that the

intelligent woman threatens racial progress by blurring gender boundaries and conflating the gendered roles necessary to maintain the dominant social structure.

While *Dracula's* vampiric women were obviously attributed with the dangerous signs of female deviance and criminal potential, Stoker managed to contain the threat and reestablish order to the world at the conclusion of his novel. And yet, women like Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra contributed to the development of more dangerous female offenders. With the increasing popularity of the vampire image, poetry, paintings, novels and films began projecting images of blatantly sexual vampiric women as clearly masculinized creatures hiding in women's bodies. My second chapter focuses on one particularly important embodiment of the female vampire--the silent movie actress, Theda Bara. By looking at both the precursors to Bara's vamping and the spin-off vamps she inspired, I will examine how the image of the female vampire further destabilized traditional gender roles and strengthened the connection between female socio-sexual deviance and sexual perversion and monstrosity.

Figure 1.
Head of a Criminal

Figure 2.
Head of a Criminal

Figure 3. "Just By Way of a Change." Postcard, circa 1901.

Figure 4. "Her first masculine attachment." Life magazine, 1913.

Figure 5. "Popping the Question." *Punch* 1851.

Figure 6. The female criminal Gabrielle Bompard

Figure 7. Another female criminal , Louise C.

2

Reproducing the Vampire: Women, Agency and Monstrosity in Early-Twentieth-Century Culture

In 1918, more than twenty years after *Dracula* popularized her image, the vampire woman was still alive and well. In that year, Theda Bara, the iconic vampire actress of the silent screen, was subpoenaed to "give expert testimony on vampires and the psychology of vampiring" in a Los Angeles murder trial (Benini 75). The case involved a man named George Martinez, who was accused of killing his wife by throwing her out of their apartment window. In his defense, his lawyer claimed that Martinez' wife was a vampire, who, having broken a principle vampire rule of conduct by falling in love with her husband, had jumped out of the window when he failed to return her affection. Martinez's lawyer wanted Bara to testify to the fact that a spurned vampire would rather die than face defeat in sexual conquest. Although the facts of the trial are sketchy at best, and whether or not Bara actually appeared is uncertain, this often-cited news story depicts the public's remarkable willingness to believe in the existence of vampire women and accept a film actress as a veritable vampire. By the time the *fin-de-siècle* gave way to the twentieth century, the vampire, a figure that had once been limited to the spectral haunting of ancient myth and folklore, had taken to walking modern city streets in the form of a woman.

While *Dracula's* vampire women were certainly not the only turn-of-the-century portrayals of the type, Stoker's text was a harbinger of a British and North American vampire feeding frenzy, anticipating twentieth-century audiences' insatiable appetite for

the likes of Theda Bara and a barrage of other deviant yet irresistible vampire sisters. Although vampiric images existed in countless mythological, cultural, and literary productions well before the turn of the century, the twentieth-century vampire came to inhabit a more central position in the popular imagination. With the development of the reproductive technologies of the modern age, including less expensive printing methods, photography and moving pictures, the image of the vamp and the fears she represented and inspired were reproduced in record numbers. At the same time, both the fear of social degeneration precipitated by women's failure to fulfill an appropriately 'feminine' role and the affiliated proliferation of scientific discourses on female deviance and criminality continued to influence twentieth-century cultural production. The scientific and historical models of criminal anthropology and sexual inversion that informed Stoker's turn-of-the-century novel continued to influence representations of female sexuality and emerging cultural representations of homosexuality. As fears of social degeneration continued to grow, the vampire became a kind of shorthand for fear of the unknown, fear of what society would become if threatening factions--be they criminals, homosexuals, or unruly women--caused the social order to crumble.

With the approach of the twentieth century, many artists continued to present disturbingly dark visions of social upheaval precipitated by changes to once-standard gender roles; by pinpointing monstrously criminal and regressively mannish women as the cause of racial degeneration, artists created representations of women that would haunt several decades of cultural production. While hundreds of paintings and literary narratives portrayed the deadly potential of the vampire woman, one collaboration between painter and writer stands out as a particularly popular and socially influential

depiction of turn-of-the-century female vampirism[1]. In 1897, at the summer exhibition in London's New Gallery, Philip Burne-Jones showed what would prove to be his most well known work. The painting, simply entitled "The Vampire," depicted a panther-like, white-skinned, dark-haired woman with bared teeth in a diaphanous nightgown crouching over the body of a bloodlessly pale young man who appears to have been either physically drained of life or sexually exhausted. (See figure 8). As Bram Dijkstra explains, Burne-Jones's painting was part of an emerging genre in Victorian visual art whereby the artist intended his painting to act as a visual morality tale that would teach his viewers an important lesson:

> The Vampire was what was called in its day a 'problem picture.' That meant it contained an underlying philosophical message that might not be apparent at first glance to the average viewer. . . . It was one of the first British entries into the field of painted 'moral documentaries,' . . .These works did not call upon the viewers' knowledge of history, classical literature, or myth but on their knowledge of modern medical research, biology, and psychiatry. (*ES* 86)

Although the problem picture's underlying moral message might not be understood by all viewers, the accompanying poem, written for the exhibition program by Burne-Jones' cousin, Rudyard Kipling, made the intended meaning explicitly clear. (See appendix 1). The collaborative exhibition clearly delineated the destabilizing potential of female sexuality by exploring the dual response to the female vampire in her ability to be a source of both fear and desire.

In "The Vampire," Kipling formulates a poetic narrative that sensationalizes the powers of the sexually aggressive woman, describing a viciously predatory, yet irresistible vampire who seduces and devastates an upright man: she makes the Fool love her, strips him to "his foolish hide," saps him of his physical and mental energy, and

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[1] See Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity* for an extensive cataloguing of fin de siècle vampire images.

tosses him aside once she has taken everything he has to give. Moreover, the poem defines the vampire and her relationship with the male victim from a distinctly male perspective and assumes a predominantly male audience. While the speaker of the poem describes the demise of one particular 'Fool', he also aligns himself, and the male members of his readership, with this foolish man: "The Fool was stripped to his foolish hide/(Even as you and I.) . . . So some of him lived but the most of him died/(Even as you and I.)." In suggesting that the speaker, or one of his male readers, might be the vampire's next victim, Kipling's poem emphasises the social implications of female sexual seduction; the social degeneration of the vampire will spread as she moves from one Fool to another, leaving the streets littered with the wasted bodies of once-productive men. While Dijikstra describes this collaborative vampire woman as a "gold digger" who is "as hungry for coin as for blood," I would argue that this vampire woman longs for something more valuable than money: the talent and intellectual abilities of her victim, "the work of [his] head and hand" and the "excellent things [he] planned" (*Idols* 351). From her roots in a superstition that perceived monsters and ghosts that sucked men's blood, the vampire had developed into a more sophisticated human being that sucks vitality, reason, and creativity from her victims.

As several critics have pointed out, the painting's bohemian setting and the man's eccentric style of dress suggest that the victim is an artist, and Burne-Jones' personal history suggest that the woman was likely modeled after Mrs. Patrick Campbell, a well-known stage actress.[2] Like *Dracula's* women, who challenge the borders of acceptable

[2]Bram Dijikstra provides a very detailed, albeit highly subjective, reading of the painting's stage-like setting and the artistic style of nightdress worn by the victim in *Evil Sisters*. Dijikstra claims the artist was inspired to paint "The Vampire" after being seduced and rejected by Mrs. Patrick Campbell. In *Vamp*, Golden also suggests that the victim is an artist and that Burne-Jones likely modeled the Vampire after Campbell.

femininity by reducing men's ability to reason and exhibiting 'unfeminine' intellectual strength, Burne-Jones' vampire also appropriates man's intellectual and physical strengths, superior social position and artistic talents--possessions that only the monstrously deviant woman would attempt to claim as her own. While Burne-Jones' vampire embodies certain 'monstrous' physical qualities, which his contemporaries would recognize as vampiric, she also reflects the increasingly popular taste for depicting everyday women as vampires:

> beginning with Burne-Jones's portrayal of a shop girl turned vampire to an unsuspecting artist, female predators were not so readily identifiable. The sexual woman as vampire did not flaunt the rapacious efficiency of her all-consuming mandibles; her seductions were far more subtle. (Dijikstra, *ES* 91)

Unlike the monstrous male vampires and criminal men, who gave themselves away by exposing sharp incisors or broad, domed foreheads, the rapacious vampire woman exhibited very few easily identifiable characteristics. Just as the lack of stigmata among female offenders encouraged Lombroso to assume an underlying deviance in all women, the image of an ordinary woman turned vampire is threatening not because she transgresses boundaries, but because she ruptures the barrier between the moralistic woman and the monstrously deviant woman. By suggesting that a deviant woman looks like any other woman, such popular representations of female socio-sexual deviance disallow the possibility of the embodiment of an idealized femininity.

While neither Kipling's poem nor Burne-Jones' painting betrayed signs of lasting artistic significance, both pieces were widely circulated throughout England, Europe and the United States, leaving a sea of scandalized and fascinated turn-of-the-century

audiences in their wake.[3] More than ten years after it first appeared in London, the American hero of *A Fool There Was*, a novel which was inspired by the poem, explains the tremendous cultural influence of Kipling's sensational narrative: "That thing of Kipling's, *The Vampire* . . . Almost everyone's read that" (Browne 130). As Bram Dijikstra explains, the painting and the poem enjoyed an international influence that far exceeded their artistic merits by "luridly [delineating] the soul-destroying consequences of feminine lust," by "tapping directly into the mainline of [the] period's ideological preoccupations" (*ES* 83, 85). Just as Stoker's *Dracula* outlines a narrative of racial decline precipitated by degenerate female bodies and minds, the poem and the painting represent the fears and anxieties caused by the deterioration of traditional standards of female sexual behavior. In these increasingly popular incarnations of female deviance, the vampire woman's 'masculine' intelligence and sexual aggressiveness blur the boundaries between 'appropriate' male and female social behavior. Together, Stoker's novel, Burne-Jones's painting and Kipling's poem fueled the vogue for the female vampire, inspiring visual and literary representations of predatory women that would significantly influence future representations of the vampire.

Hoping to profit from the vampire craze and the popularity of Burne-Jones painting and the accompanying poem, Porter Emerson Browne, an American writer, turned Kipling's lyric narrative into both a highly successful play (1906) and a best-selling novel (1909). Just as the vampire woman's eyes were notorious for drawing men to her like magnets, the magnetic appeal of the vampire brought audiences to Browne's play in droves and garnered his low-grade novel best-selling status. In the play and the

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[3] Burne-Jone's painting first toured in the United States in 1902. Kipling's poem was widely circulated both in conjunction with Burne-Jone's painting and independently.

novel, both titled *A Fool There Was*, Browne transforms the Fool of Kipling's ballad into a Wall Street banker turned international diplomat, an ideal specimen of evolving manhood, named John Schuyler. In keeping with Burne-Jones' moral message, the story of *A Fool There Was* is a cautionary melodrama of the Husband's increasing degeneration, paralleled by the ascendance of the Vampire. Using morality-tale conventions in much the same way Burne-Jones employed the precepts of the problem picture to 'educate' his viewers, Browne presents a cast of characters who act as representatives of easily recognizable social roles: "The Husband," "The Wife," "The Little Girl" and "The Vampire." Although the part of The Vampire would stand out from such a cast if viewed by an audience today, Browne's contemporary public had become increasingly familiar with the role that the female vampire would play in this type of family melodrama. From this list of characters an early-twentieth-century audience would expect a horrific story of vampiric seduction, the Husband's untimely demise and the resulting destruction of the standard family unit.

In Browne's narrative, the stereotyped situation involving the lady in distress, the villain and the hero is inverted into the Husband in distress and the predatory female Vampire. In keeping with evolutionary discourse's linear hierarchy of racial development, John Schuyler is first depicted as the ideal specimen of the race who is paired with a suitably generic wife, Kate, the "perfect figure of perfect womanhood" (Browne 91). And yet, even the idealized masculine and feminine pairing cannot ward off the degenerative incursions of the female vampire. As in Stoker's *Dracula*, the Husband's disgraceful fall depicts more than a man's personal descent into immorality; it is a not-too-subtle instructional parable that delineates the social responsibilities and

potential failure of the ruling class by exposing the regressive potential of the female when aligned against the male's physical and social evolution. Schuyler's degeneration at the hands of a predatory woman with primitivistic features and a 'masculine' demeanor exposes the potential for reversion in a seemingly perfect male specimen. The destruction of Schuyler's family is a threatening example of what could befall the entire race if female sexual deviance is left unchecked. As in the depictions of the vampire women that preceded it, Browne's mannishly aggressive vampire woman becomes less a specter of an undead past than a harbinger of the chaotic, degenerative world to come if the socio-sexual deviance of the criminal, vampiric woman is left unchecked.

In his portrayal of imperiled racial evolution, Browne relies heavily on discourses of degeneration and his public's willingness to recognize the deviant woman's ability to inhibit racial progress. As in Stoker's *Dracula* Browne engages a scientific mind in the character of Dr. DeLancey to advance theories of racial degeneration and deviance. According to evolutionary practitioners, the future of the race could no longer be entrusted to the imperfect talents of nature and the unregulated powers of physical attraction; rather, educated men familiar with the 'pseudoscientific' narratives of racial advancement, like Professor Van Helsing and Dr. DeLancey, should oversee the propagation of the species. (Dijikstra, *ES* 17). In fact, Dr. DeLancey provides the scientific stamp of approval needed to sanction the marriage of the novel's heroine, Kate Blair, to one of two upstanding male specimens, John Schuyler or Tom Blake[4]:

[4] It is also worth noting the similarities between Kate Blair's and Lucy Westenra's marriage prospects. Kate's mother's exclamation, "But they can't both marry her," anticipates Kate's eventual dilemma as she is forced to choose between the two men in much the same way that Westenra must choose between her three suitors. Although Kate stops short of mentioning the possibility of multiple husbands, like Lucy, she hates to choose between John and Tom for fear that it will cause one of the men to suffer.

> 'The prettiest, sweetest, finest, loveliest child I ever knew, by Jove,' he declared . . . Yes, sir. If you two old ninnies don't force your sons to marry her, I'll take it into my own hands, damme it if I don't, by Jove!'
>
> 'But they can't both marry her' protested the widow of Jimmy Blair. . .
>
> The Doctor waved his hand, loftily.
>
> 'A mere detail, he asserted. 'As long as one of 'em marries her, that fixes it, doesn't it? And it doesn't make any difference which one; they're both equally fine boys, both of 'em . . . Did you ever see better shoulders--better shaped heads--better carriages?' (Browne 49)

As Bram Dijikstra explains, the Doctor is a proponent of racial advancement through selective breeding; "As an evolutionary technician, the doctor is proud to see how [these boys] turned out" and eagerly anticipates the union of one of the men with the perfect feminine specimen, regardless of love or affection (Dijikstra ES 17).

In marrying Kate, John Schuyler continues a long-standing family tradition of responsible breeding. The novel begins with a lengthy description of John's outstanding lineage and his family's admirable attempts to improve the race:

> John Schuyler came from a long line of clean-bodied, clean-souled, clear-eyed, clear-headed ancestors; and from these he had inherited cleanness of body and of soul, clearness of eye and of head . . . they had amalgamated for him their virtues, and they had eradicated for him their vices; they had cultivated for him those things of theirs that it were well to cultivate; and they had plucked ruthlessly from the gardens of heredity the weeds and tares that might have grown to check his growth. (Browne 12)

In that he represents the culmination of his family's hereditary gardening whereby vice is weeded out and virtue is cultivated, Schuyler appears as a particularly advanced member of the evolutionary elite, exemplifying the goals of selective breeding intrinsic to criminological and eugenic discourses.

In fact, it is this remarkable lineage that makes it so difficult for the Doctor, and even the reader, to believe that Schuyler could fall victim to the vampire's seductions. As criminological discourses stressed the importance of tracing the family line in finding the

source of deviant tendencies and thus preventing their propagation, Dr. DeLancey assumes that Schuyler's strong lineage should prevent him from being vamped:

> 'Jack Schuyler and a woman? You're a fool! It's ridiculous--impossible--absurd . . . Why I've known him since he was born. And I knew his father, and his mother, and his grandfather and his grandmother before him! Damme, I don't believe it. I won't believe it.' (Browne 182)

In seeing his 'genetically engineered' superhero become the Vampire's latest victim, the Doctor struggles to reconcile his understanding of Schuyler's racial fitness with the young man's increasing physical and moral weakness and diminishing desire for intellectual and social advancement. As a true testament to the power of the female vampire, she is capable of destroying even the most upstanding male models; in fact, she prefers to conquer the strongest, most 'elite' members of male society as they hold the greatest financial and emotional reward.

Despite the racial cleanliness inherited from his Aryan ancestors, Schuyler's failure is, nonetheless, precipitated by the reversive influence of the degenerate female body who drains the striving male of his vitality and causes him to miss out on the evolutionary advance of civilization (Dijikstra, *ES* 221). While Browne's novel focuses primarily on the Husband's increasing degeneration and the Vampire's ascendance to power, the threat of the vampire extends well beyond the Schuyler-family unit. The vampire's behavior also prevents, at least temporarily, the Doctor's evolutionary practices and thus, threatens the health of his other patients; by neglecting his patients to go to England to rescue Schuyler, the Doctor risks having his replacement "kill a lot of 'em" (Browne 102). In keeping with the belief that the vampire woman will damage the entire race if left to her own devices, the actions of Browne's Vampire have repercussions for

society at large as she corrupts the "physical vigor and moral cleanliness of the bourgeois body" (Foucault 1981 54).

In contrast to the Husband's admirable lineage, the Vampire's familial heritage predetermines her degenerate future and criminal behavior; she is furnished with ancestral roots that mirror those of the criminal anthropologist's typical female offender. Like many of Lombroso's criminals, The Vampire is the progeny of cross-class breeding and French ancestors--genetic factors which criminal anthropologists interpreted as indicators of extreme criminal potential. For many turn-of-the-century criminologists, the French female criminal, as a member of a less 'refined' nation, exhibited more obvious physical stigmata; she was "infinitely more typical and uglier" than other female criminals (Lombroso *FO*, 94). And while the vampire's parents are both French citizens--both Caucasian--Browne likens the presence of cross-class blood in the vampire's veins to racial miscegenation by stressing the differences in her parents' speech and blood. While her father is a member of the "lily white" aristocracy, speaks the "French that is of Paris" and provides her with the "blood of three kings," her mother is hybrid peasant stock from the "black Breton" coast, speaks in "patois" and supplies the "blood of god knows how many peasant swine" (19, 21, 59). Even the Vampire's father is unable to reconcile the contradictions of his child's bloodlines: "'Tis strange, that, *n'es-ce pas*? In that small piece of carrion which you hold there upon your knees runs the blood of three kings.'" (25). Although Browne's vampire mirror's the physical image of Burne-Jones painting, by assigning the vampire French lineage, Browne positions his female predatory as a 'near' racial other, thus beginning the process by which the female vampire would become increasingly racialized. The father further reinforces the vampire's lack of

appropriate genealogy in naming the child: "I should wish that the baby be known as . . . Rien. It is an appropriate name, Rien. It is not a bad name; in fact, it is rather a pretty name" (25). Lacking any family name and given a first name that literally means nothing, the vampire is stripped of the traceable genealogy, racial history and background that is necessary to ensure her development into a responsible and productive member of society.

The vampire's mother also provides fertile ground for producing the deviant vampire child as she possesses an animalistic nature and a physical form that parallels Burne-Jones painted vampire with the bloodstained lips: "She had been pretty once, in an animal way. She was not now. Lips that doubtless had been red were white and drawn in pain; and there was blood upon them, where white, even teeth had bitten" (20). In an attempt to trace the vampire's deviance even further, the grandmother is described as a "heavy, course-featured woman, thin hair, streaked with gray, flat-backed, flat-breasted . . . awaiting an end that she had so often watched in the sullen ferocity that is of beast rather than of man" (20). Browne's narrative also hints at the Vampire's prerequisite mannish tendencies as her father explains how difficult it was to tell whether the child was a boy or a girl: "'I had a daughter here . . . Or was it a son? *Ma foi!* It were difficult--ah, yes! I remember now! A daughter." (59). The Vampire's home also reflects the symptomatic criminality of its inhabitants in that the women have rejected their household responsibilities. Scattered throughout the hovel are signs of domestic neglect: "a smoke-stained fireplace beside which was strewn an armful of faggots . . . a number of broken and greasy dishes, filled with fragments of food. And all about on the floor lay the litter of the sick-room." (20). Much like the myriad images of domestic chaos

depicted in the popular anti-suffrage cartoons of the era which suggested the degenerative results of challenging traditional gender roles, the 'uncivilized' state of the household reflects the deviant women's rejection of feminine responsibilities and disinterest in maintaining social order.

The father also exhibits signs of inappropriate gender behavior that further the construction of the vampire's family as a source of gender malfunction. Unlike the "honest, impassive Dutchmen" and "broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped English" from whom Schuyler is a descendant, the vampire's aristocratic father provides her with a weak genealogical heritage tainted by noticeably 'feminine' mannerisms, dandyism and sexual promiscuity. He is described as a laughing, musically speaking, wildly gesturing man who is "a bit too slender--a bit too graceful" and "a bit too well groomed" (11, 20). In addition to his strikingly 'feminine' physical appearance and behavior, the father also exhibits characteristics of 'masculine' sexual aggression and perverse sexual identity; he is a sexual seducer who has many "families" scattered throughout France. With great pleasure, he explains to the vampire's grandmother the destruction his many affairs have caused and the drama of his trips to visit his progeny:

> 'There have been many pleadings, and revilings--tears, and curses--bended knees, and unbended arms.' He indicated with a graceful gesture a deep cut upon the back of his left hand. 'It was a woman--a very pretty woman . . . At least she had been pretty; and she was pretty again when she did that. Her eyes--it was like lighting a fire in a cave. Did you ever light a fire in a cave, madame? . . . But, of course not! Women kindle their fires in stoves--or fire-places. It is for men to light the fires of caves.' (58-9).

In fact, when the father comes back to see his daughter for the first time since her birth, the five-year-old child uses her powerful gaze and sinuous movements to usurp her father's position of authority. After her grandmother introduces the young girl to her

father, the child confronts him in a show-down of wills in which the winner gains the right to dominate and the loser plummets to his death:

> The child looked at the man; the man looked at the child; and so for a long, long time they stood eye upon eye . . . At length she began to smile a little, with her lips. But he did not smile . . .
>
> After a long, long time, she took a slow, sinuous step toward him--then another . . . He stepped back, still looking at her, his eyes still on hers . . . He was back to the great cliff--the sheer cliff at the base of which the huge seas beat in sullen, unceasing impotence . . .
>
> His breath came chokingly, gaspingly. Yet another step he took, away from her . . .Yet another . . . And then . . .
>
> It was an accident, perhaps. Yes, of course; it must have been an accident. he had not noticed . . . For, as again she advanced, her eyes on his, his eyes on hers, again he retreated. And suddenly, in utter silence save for the rendering of crumbling earth and uprooted grass, he slid over the edge of the great rock. (61).

As she unfeelingly causes her father's destruction, the vampire becomes a hybrid of the malformed gender characteristics inherited from her parents, exhibiting both 'feminine' beauty and callous 'masculine' aggression--characteristics that will serve her well as she goes on to commit more vamping crimes.

The physical portrait of Browne's vampire also borrows heavily from the popular images of the criminally seductive and predatory female envisioned by Stoker and Burne-Jones. Like Lombroso's female offender and *Dracula's* female vampires, Browne's vampire woman embodies the contradictions of female socio-sexual deviance: while she is seductively beautiful and desirable, she also inspires fear in that she has resisted the powers of racial evolution and exhibits many primitivistic and animalistic qualities. As can be seen in the following description, The Vampire is lazy, overly aggressive and replicates the movements of a predatory animal:

> She stood there, white hands clasping the bare rail, lithe, sinewy, lazy body tilted a bit backward as though in the grasp of the spitting wind. Her throat was bare to it, and her breast. Her lips were parted. Her eyes were

> deep lidded. Her head was poised like a tiger lily on its stalk . . . For a long time she stood motionless. Then she stretched the long muscles of her body, as a panther stretches. She was very, very beautiful. (Browne 141)

Like her vampire sisters before her, Browne's vampire woman is described in animalistic terms that reveal her atavistic origins, criminal potential and physical and moral degeneration. Just as the men in *Dracula* respond to the vampires' advances with both fear and desire, Browne's vamp appears as both frightening and irresistibly attractive.

As in Stoker's *Dracula*, Browne's novel expends considerable energy exploring the implications of vampirism on the mental and physical strength of the male. In *A Fool There Was*, Tom Blake is particularly concerned for his friend John's decaying intelligence. Blake is shocked by the Vampire's ability to "suck out [Schuyler's] brains" or to take his grey matter as her own and, after seeing Schuyler rotting away in his apartment, Tom asks, "'Haven't you a spark of manhood left? 'No brains?'" (276, 278). This representation of the sexually aggressive woman's desire for the man's brains rather than his blood is also reflected in the descriptions of the Vampire's previous victims. Whereas he had once been an ideal specimen of 'manhood,' what Dijikstra calls a member of the "genetically privileged" class, his encounter with The Vampire reduces Schuyler to a nervous and mentally inferior version of himself (16):

> The Schuyler that had come was different, very different, from the Schuyler that had gone. He was still quick, agile, alert; but . . . Little wrinkles had gathered at eye-corners--deeper were the lines that ran from nostrils to the ends of his mouth. But these changes one might not have noticed were it not for the eyes. For, from these the light had gone. They were as lamps unlit . . . before he had concentrated easily upon that which he had to do, now it was with difficulty--almost, even, with impossibility. He paused often, to pour from the decanter a little brandy into a small glass, and to drink that which he had poured. He rose from his chair, to stride nervously, up and down, up and down. (192).

His tendency toward excessive drinking, the increasing lack of intelligence reflected in his eyes and his inability to concentrate indicate the drastic changes precipitated by Schuyler's encounter with the Vampire woman. In addition, his methodical pacing compares Schuyler to a caged animal, reflecting the extent to which the Vampire was able to reduce this man to a primitivistic version of his former self.

Similarly, Parmalee, another victim of the vamp who was once a wealthy and upstanding specimen of manhood, also suffers from "cranial rot" after encountering the Vampire and his "shriveled brain" makes the young man turn suicidal. Not only did the Vampire woman's ability to steal man's brain-power for herself represent a breach of appropriate gender roles, this capability also threatened the advancement of the race by denying man the ability to reach his greatest potential. As Bram Dijikstra explains, "The expectation that man would soon reach true supermale status informed the ruminations of philosophers, scientists, and artists alike, from Nietzche to Nordau, from Lombroso to Freud, and from Wagner to Alfred Jarry, on up well into the twentieth century to the likes of Ezra Pound and, ultimately, Adolph Hitler" (Dijikstra *ES* 73). There was a real fear that allowing women to move away from the inferior role that society had assigned them and encouraging their intellectual development would decrease the mental growth of the male sex and thus prevent racial and social advancement. Because she possessed the ability to distract the male from the pursuit of intellectual and moral advancement the sexual woman represented a particularly dangerous atavistic force aligned against evolutionary advancement of the race.

Hoping that the success of Browne's narrative would carry over into silent film and help save his faltering production company, William Fox bought the screen rights to

A Fool There Was in 1911. Fox Studios then began conducting a widely publicized search for the perfect vampire woman, someone who embodied the by-now-familiar image from Burne-Jones' painting. The actress chosen--Theodosia Goodman. Goodman was a relatively inexperienced stage actress from Cincinnati who had recently begun making the rounds of the movie studios in New Jersey in the hopes of saving herself from her precarious financial state. While several factors influenced the studio's decision to cast Goodman, including her ability to take stage directions and the knowledge that she would come cheaper than a 'real' star, Powell, and other studio executives, saw the dark-haired woman with pallid skin and coal-black eyes as a 'natural' for The Vampire part.

After finding the woman with the perfect vampire physiognomy, the studio then worked even harder to transform Theodosia Goodman into the mysterious, exotic and deadly Vampire that became known as Theda Bara. As Ronald Genini explains, "[w]hen Frank Powell, the film's Griffith-trained director, discovered an almost unknown actress, she was put under contract to Fox, not only to play the part but to *be* the part" (15). Although the multi-million dollar pay cheques and superstar status of today's movie actors make it hard to imagine, in the earliest days of movie production, there were no movie stars. Because film producers feared that giving billing to the cast would cause actors to demand more money, actors received no screen credit and were known to audiences only by the film companies for which they worked. While the public was already patronizing the films of their favorite 'stars,' prior to 1913, actors were known only by the film companies for which they worked, identified only as "Our Mutual Girl" or the "Biograph Girl[5]." (Hamilton 22). By the teens, however, when Bara began

[5] While she failed to receive the same level of notoriety as Pickford or Bara, Florence Lawrence became the first film actress, or actor, to be identified by name in 1913.

vamping her way onto screens across America and abroad, silent movies were gaining in popularity and favorite faces were beginning to be identified and demanded by the general public. In response to the increasing demand for 'star' quality, Fox Studios cooked up a series of media events that turned an unknown actress into an instant celebrity and this continues to stand out as one of the most remarkable publicity campaigns in the vast archives of film history. By virtue of a series of ludicrous newspaper stories and contrived press conferences, Theodosia Goodman became Theda Bara and Theda Bara became both the quintessential vamp and Hollywood's first fabricated film star. In a 1933 interview with Upton Sinclair, Fox commented on the very deliberate construction of the Theda Bara public personae:

> One day it was conceived in our publicity department that we had every type of woman on the screen expect an Arabian; our publicity director felt that the public would like an Arabian. He conceived the story that this Miss Goodman was born in Arabia--her father was an Arab and her mother a French woman who had played in the theatres in Paris.
>
> So we took 'Arab,' spelling it backwards, made it 'Bara,' and shortened the first name 'Theodosia' to 'Theda' and thus the name 'Theda Bara[6].' . . . He dressed her in the regular Arabian costume, and surrounded her with the proper atmosphere, and then the newspaper boys all came in. He said, 'I want you to meet Miss Bara,' and gave them her history. (Genini 16)

Even before her first vampire film hit the screen, Theda Bara was publicly known as the dark, mysterious woman with "sinister affinities for violent crime, perverse sex, and the larger members of the cat family" (Levin 272). So effective was the studio hype that the wild history concocted by the studio publicity department became intrinsic to the public understanding of Theda Bara in particular and the act of vamping in general. In fact, the studio hype and the personal history of the actress became so inextricably linked

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[6] Although the name 'Bara' was likely derived from the name of the actress' maternal grandfather, Baranger, the story told by William Fox received a great deal of press and several critics continued to quote it as fact several decades after Bara's death.

that critics continue to argue over which stories are true and which mere fabrications. Depending on the account, Theda Bara was either born on the sands of the Sahara or in the shadows of the pyramids--her parentage was variously ascribed to a French painter, an Italian artist, or a desert sheik who had mated with an Egyptian princess, an Arab mistress, or a French actress. Other stories insisted that she had been weaned on serpent's blood, given in mystic marriage to the Sphinx, and fought over by wild, nomadic tribesmen. In keeping with the 'role,' the actress often pretended not to speak English and was chauffeured in a white limousine attended by Nubian footmen. She gave audiences in black draped hotel suites pungent with the odor of incense and perfume and news stories stated that the actress bathed in blood and ate raw hamburger. In a particularly outrageous attempt to increase public interest in the actress prior to the release of her latest film, *The Tiger Woman*, Fox Studios 'leaked' the stipulations of Bara's newest contract to the media. According to this supposed three-year agreement, Theda Bara:

- must not marry;
- must not appear in public without veils;
- must not ride in public transportation;
- must not take her 'constitutional' during daylight;
- must have curtains put over her car windows so as not to be seen;
- must not go to Turkish Baths;
- must not allow private snapshots to be taken of herself. (Golden 111)

While one cannot assume that readers of these sensational stories were naïve enough to accept them as fact, movie studios went to great lengths to define the off-screen activities of their stars, theorizing that extending the scenario beyond film reels would make the plots more believable and increase box-office receipts.

In addition, the studio portraits of the actress relied on sinister contrasts in black and white and the accouterments of the vampire trade: human skeletons and the feline

hides, glamorous peacock feathers and live ravens, luxurious jewels and barely-there costumes. (See figures 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13). In virtually all of Bara's studio portraits, the actress' array of vampiric qualities were accentuated and exaggerated--her darkly-kohled and heavily-lidded eyes, her pallid skin and voluptuous figure, her smoldering expression and abundance of dark hair--thus adding to the growing list of characteristics that the public was learning to associate with the fatal woman. In fact, the public so completely aligned the actress with her on-screen deviance that some audience members attacked cardboard cutouts of Theda Bara outside of movie theatres and mothers dragged their children away from the actress if they happened to cross her path in the street. Even when the public was made aware of the truth, that Theda Bara was really an ordinary woman named Theodosia from Cincinnati, the sensationalistic and undeniably more dynamic, archetypal screen personae continued to hold precedence. Thanks in large part to the endless publicity stunts and the sheer quantity of Theda-as-vampire images available, Theda Bara became the cinematic expression of the early-twentieth century's "nightmare conception of Woman, *any* woman, as vampire" (Dijikstra *ES* 229). The fact that a real woman was subsumed by this vampire identity only served to reinforce the validity of the argument--that any woman, even a nice Jewish girl from Cincinnati, could become a bloodthirsty vampire.

By the time *A Fool There Was* hit the theatres in 1915, the buzz of publicity surrounding the actress helped ensure Fox's first real box office success. In the film version of *A Fool There Was*, Edward José starred as John Schuyler, Mabel Fremyear played Kate Schuyler and Theda Bara played The Vampire. As in Browne's novel, the characters are defined by the cast list's clearly defined roles: Wife, Husband, Daughter,

Friend, and Vampire. And once again, while the other characters all garner formal names and identities, the Vampire remains nameless; the Vampire is without any genealogical history or source and is referred to throughout the film as the Woman, thus standing in for Woman's unnamed potential for destruction and sexual impropriety. The film begins with a happy family scene with Schuyler, his wife, his daughter, and some family friends all dressed in light clothing, gazing upon the "sunset of happiness." The Woman, is introduced wearing a petulant frown, a dark hat decorated with elaborate feathers, a black jacket with tails and a long skirt of dramatic black and white stripes with one of her wasted lovers in tow. Just as in Browne's novel, the forces of good and evil are clearly delineated in the film's opening scene. In this scene, which prophesies the ill fortune that will befall the family, the Woman attempts to speak to the daughter only to have the mother whisk the girl away with a meaningful look at the Woman and a dire warning to the child. In one of the film's relatively infrequent titles, the Woman then declares, "Someday you will regret that!" before driving away in a chauffeured limousine with her current lover.

As in Browne's novel, Schuyler, a wealthy lawyer and statesman, has been appointed by the President to a diplomatic post in Great Britain. Meanwhile, The Vampire has learned of Schuyler's assignment through the newspapers and books passage aboard the same ship. A shot of her domicile reveals dark, heavy draperies, a chaise longue, and many bottles of liquor strewn about the room. The Woman reclines on the chaise longue in a flowing gown, which constantly slips from her shoulders, revealing a rather plump body. Her current lover enters, furious that she plans to go abroad without him, but she pacifies him with lies, picks his pocket while embracing him, and finally

induces him to leave. By the time Schuyler leaves his wife and child and embarks on his journey to England, the Woman has set her sights on Schuyler as her next victim. Through a variety of 'chance' meetings and the use of her hypnotic gaze, the Vampire succeeds in luring Schuyler not only from his wife and child, but also from his government post. As Schuyler bids a reluctant goodbye to his family, The Woman arranges for her deck chair to be moved next to Schuyler's. She catches his eye through a porthole as he and the family stand on deck and Schuyler is hypnotized by her glance. In fact, a friend has to recall his attention, so intense is The Woman's stare. As the ship fades from sight and the hero stands waving to his family, The Woman slithers up behind Schuyler and taps him on the shoulder and drops her red rose on the deck. Being the perfect gentleman, Schuyler stoops to pick up the flower and hands it to The Vampire. With a triumphant look, she leaves him, convinced that he finds her irresistible and the film then cuts to a shot of Kate and the daughter weeping for Schuyler.

Two months pass, and Schuyler is seen in Italy with The Woman, his masculine position of authority having given way completely as he lounges with his head in the vamp's lap, surrounded by palm trees. As they languorously drink from the same cup, the mail comes with a letter from Kate, who expresses concern over the increasing infrequency of his letters. Although he initially feels some guilt for having abandoned his wife and child, The Woman convinces him to stay with her and even signs his letter to Kate for him: "I am with whom I love more than any one in the world--(signed) the fool." As the hero descends further into debauchery, his wife, ever faithful, waits patiently at home. As soon as John Schuyler abandons his wife and child and falls prey to the vampire, his demise becomes predictable. In a technique that was considered quite

innovative for its time, *A Fool There Was* plays up the contrast between the degenerative, sensual world of the Woman and the domestic bliss of the wife and daughter by alternating between the two settings.

The remainder of the film chronicles the continuing dissipation of the Fool through drinking, wild parties, and the agony his affair causes Kate and his daughter. Scenes of the Fool and the Woman show him groveling at her feet, looking older and less refined with passing time. In fact, the man depicted in these later scenes is hardly discernable as the same individual in a well-cut suit and top hat who appeared in the opening scenes and graced the lobby cards that were used to advertise the film. Although the elements of drink, debt and marital infidelity that Browne incorporated into the story were undoubtedly familiar to audiences, this narrative also included a startlingly different methodology by centering around a sexually aggressive woman who took pleasure in her lover's destruction--the vampire. The stereotyped triangular situation involving the lady in distress, the hero, and the villain is inverted. In this drama, the Husband, ensnared by an evil-designing temptress, abandons a dutiful wife and a loving daughter. In contrast, the Vampire shadows forth the chaos, destruction and death that ensue when man succumbs to instinct.

While today's audiences might laugh at the vamping antics of A *Fool There Was,* the audiences who first viewed the film in 1915 were both enthralled and horrified by the deviant woman's power over her victims. As in *Dracula's* vampire women, Bara's character is presented as non-supernatural, beautiful and human in her physical appearance. And yet, Bara's cinema vamp also embodied many of the same atavistic qualities that surfaced in Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra, qualities that the public now

recognized as tell-tale signs of primitivistic reversion, features often described, albeit in a contradictory fashion, in Lombroso's cataloguing of female offenders. Like the female criminal outlined in chapter one, the cinema vamp had large, cavernous eyes, a mouth that was scarlet (or at least that was the assumption made by critics when describing the vamp of black and white film), and slightly too large, indicating a sort of unquenchable thirst and amorousness, and if she is true to type, her hair would be "either groomed in an iridescent coiffure of repellent opulence, or worn loose and flowing in a twining, serpentine profusion" (Frost 44). In addition to the theatrical effects that were used to replicate the image of the criminal woman, the public interpreted the very structure of a vampire actress's body and face as "evidence" that she was well-suited to the vampire role. As a contemporary reviewer of Bara's film, *The Serpent*, explains, "Miss Bara . . . is a perfect specimen of the "vampire" type. . . [she] is so well fitted by looks to act this sort of creature before the camera, it would be squandering her natural resources to cast her in a Mary Pickford sort of role" (Anon 1916, 12).

The bloodless pallor that was used to make Theda Bara's vamp seem more haunting and explain her blood-lust, and her dark-ringed, sunken eyes covered in indigo makeup were borrowed from the widely recognized pseudoscientific conception of the typical female criminal; in fact, many of the articles written about the actress openly attributed the public's understanding of Bara's criminal status to the precepts of criminal anthropology. As one movie columnist, Archie Bell, wrote in 1915, "The artists and specialists in crime have called [Bara's] face the most cruel and wicked in the world. Bernard Shaw's specialist in 'Pygmalion' would find the coils of the python or ancient oriental poison in her voice." In 1916, Emily H. Vaught, a 'New York Society

Phrenologist and Physiognomist,' made the connection between criminological discourses and vamping even clearer by providing her understanding of Theda Bara's physiognomy for a newspaper article. In an obvious attempt to mimic the language of criminal anthropology, Vaught described the actress in the following manner:

> never in all my experience as a professional character reader have I gazed into a face portraying such wickedness and evil . . . Miss Bara belongs to what we term the wide-faced, muscular type of people whose bones are slender and small, and who are governed by the same muscular system as the serpent . . . they have feline temperament, deliberately taking pains to inflict suffering on others. (Anon 263)

In a similar article, entitled "Wickedest Face in the World More Wicked Than Ever," a journalist explains the importance of maintaining, and even improving upon, the actress's criminal physiognomy in depicting the role of the vamp. The unnamed writer describes Bara's faculty for enhancing her own 'natural' physical ability to portray evil with acquired facial distortions that her audience would recognize as signifiers of moral degeneration:

> Although Mlle. Bara is a wonderfully beautiful woman, she has cultivated a sinister droop to her left eye and a cruel expression of the mouth, which help much in her portrayal of the wickedest woman ever written about. (Anon 1915)

Due to the public's recognition of Bara's 'natural' ability for portraying the deviant woman, audiences refused to take the actress seriously when she attempted to play the virtuous woman. In 1917, when Bara appeared in *The Greatest Love*, a picture that cast the vamp in the role of victim, critics declared the vampire-woman physically unfit to portray the role of the good woman:

> She is not the right type, to begin with, and her assumption of girlish innocence . . . is set at naught by the eyes and mouth that have done so much to assure her standing as one of the leading vampires of the screen. (Weitzel 1917)

Like Lombroso's criminal, Theda Bara's body marked her as a relic of a vanished race; she was doomed even before birth to a life of crime; for her to act otherwise made her characters seem unbelievable.

In keeping with the construction of her criminal nature, the vamp was also portrayed as an unusually intelligent woman. Many reporters described cinema vamps as uncommonly intelligent women who possessed great aptitudes for foreign languages and the ability to converse in a mannish fashion. In reference to Theda Bara, a reporter for *Photoplay* magazine informs his readers that she speaks English, French, Italian and German and that, "The first impression Theda Bara made on me was that of a remarkable and burning intellectuality. Her English is as crystalline as Phyllis Neilson-Terry's, and she uses the ranging vocabulary of a literary *man*." (Franklin 71 *my emphasis*). Whereas criminological discourses began as strictly a field of scientific study, by the 1920s, the general public was familiar enough with Lombrosian categories to attempt to read one's personality and moral integrity through the shape of one's skull, physical peculiarities or inappropriate levels of intelligence. To moviegoers well-versed in the languages of criminal anthropology, the truth of Bara's vampire body read like a confession of guilt.

When asked to respond to the frequent claims that Bara's body and mind revealed her innately evil nature, the actress' statements reflected Bara's sagacious ability to maintain her popularity by telling her audience exactly what they wanted to hear. She responded in a suitably ambiguous manner that permitted her to neither deny nor confirm her atavistically deviant status:

> You say I have the most wicked face of any woman. You say my hair is like the serpent locks of Medusa, that my eyes have the cruel cunning of Borgia, that my mouth is the mouth of the sinister, scheming Delilah, that

> my hands are like the talons of a Circe or the blood-bathing Elizabeth Bathory. And then you ask me of my soul--you wish to know if it is reflected in my face. The belief that I have lived before and have taken many parts on this world's stage has a strong hold on my imagination. (Hamilton 29)

As a wise marketer of her public image, Bara understood the average filmgoer's tendency to blur the line between fact and fiction. Recognizing that her off-screen vampirism added validity to her sensational on-screen image, Bara was often noncommittal when questioned about her public image; unwilling to completely deny her personal deviance she provided just enough vampiric detail to keep her audience titillated while preserving the level of moral integrity necessary to pacify her more conservative viewers.

According to the film studios that produced them, vampire films were instructional parables that presented a moral message, which, in spite of their racy plot lines, should appease even the most conservative viewers. The cinema vamp's story was a tale of monstrous female degeneracy and the destruction of the family unit--a story that would strike fear into the hearts of men and women and make all viewers more determined than ever to behave in a moral fashion. When faced with the banning of all Theda Bara films in her hometown, the actress insisted that her vampire image was not intended to glamorize or encourage deviant behavior. Rather, the vampire plot functioned as a warning to women: that such deviant behavior will lead only to personal misery and suffering. In a letter to the mayor of Cincinnati, Bara stressed the instructional potential of her vampire films and their unprecedented ability to influence moviegoers:

> I believe I am showing time and again the unhappiness, the misery which fall to the lot of men and women transgressors and the contempt and hatred which such people inspire in the good society and among well-behaved people of this world. Furthermore, I am reaching one million

> persons each day--an audience larger than was ever had before by any man or woman in the world's history. (Bara 100)

Recognizing the subversive potential of her portrayal of aggressive female sexuality and her ability to usurp male authority, Bara and Fox Studios attempted to downplay the explosive potential of the actress' on-screen vamping--a subversive potential that was grasped by both proponents and critics of women's suffrage.

At the highpoint of the cinema vamp's popularity, the political climate of the nation was steeped in both a fear of and a desire for equal rights for women. Since the vampire often reflected the shifting political ideologies of a culture, virtually all segments of Bara's audience recognized the cinema vampire's relevance to the hot political topic of women's suffrage. Because she is viewed as a negative female stereotype--another stereotype that threatens to align women with all things destructive and nasty--the vamp is rarely viewed as a worthy feminist subject. According to film critics like Marjorie Rosen, Theda Bara's character is "an absurd sexual distortion" and a "permanent disservice to women" (Rosen 213). In her exploration of the femme fatale, Mary Ann Doane also explains the predominantly negative meaning of the sexually predatory female:

> the femme fatale is situated as evil . . . Her textual eradication involves a desperate reassertion of control on the part of the threatened male subject. Hence it would be a mistake to see her as some kind of heroine of modernity. She is not the subject of feminism but a symptom of male fears about feminism. Nevertheless, the representation--like any representation--is not totally under the control of its producers and, once disseminated, comes to take on a life of its own. (2-3)

Even some of the statements made by the actress herself suggest that the vamp would make a poor poster girl for the early twentieth-century suffrage movement. When confronted by a reporter about her opinion on 'The Suffrage Question' in 1917, Theda

Bara, unwilling to offend either her studio or her audience, responded in a typically ambiguous manner:

> I have very great doubts as to the wisdom of universal suffrage by amendment to the constitution . . . but I have not studied the subject as thoroughly as it deserves and therefore am a bit reluctant to positively commit myself. (Golden 105-6)

While Bara's comments on suffrage reflect the actress' hesitancy to be personally aligned with women's rights, she eagerly committed her on-screen vamp personae to the feminist cause. In statements made to the press, Bara frequently attributed her vamp characters with vengeful motivations that involved righting the wrongs done to women:

> Believe me, for every woman vampire, there are ten men of the same type . . . men who take everything from women--love, devotion, beauty, youth and give nothing in return! V stands for Vampire and it stands for Vengeance too. The vampire that I play is the vengeance of my sex upon its exploiters. You see . . . I have the face of a vampire, perhaps, but the heart of a 'feministe[7].' (Higashi 61)

For many of Bara's female spectators, the vampire presented an exciting potentiality that most women had never experienced; she was financially and sexually independent, physically strong and indestructible. While the vamp was usually destroyed and domestic order restored by the end of the vampire film[8], Bara recognized the vicarious appeal of the female vampire narrative for her female fans. She provided women with the opportunity to imagine being "beautifully wicked" and represented "the embodiment of a secret dream which all of us have or have had" (Millet 34).

> I like the adventuress because she has colour and intensity . . . I can make something out of her; she stands forth vivid and living; she is the only human sort of woman the American public wants; they must have

[7] It is worth noting Bara's use of the French form of the word feminist, suggesting, perhaps, that the actress wished to distinguish herself from the more controversial image of the English and American suffragettes.
[8] *A Fool There Was* is the only such film from the period that ends with the vampire woman in control and the domestic realm still in shambles. In all other renderings of the vampire plot from this period, the degenerative woman is destroyed in the final reels of the film and the man reclaims the domestic realm.

> colorless heroines, or sugary-sweet heroines, playing white little parts in white little love stories. Understand me--I am not saying that American women are like that; they are warm, wonderful vital things, but people seem to want heroines and not women. Therefore I choose to play wicked women, because when photoplay women are good and real they often cease to be women. Isn't that odd?" (Franklin, 71).

It was this subversive potential that many of Bara's contemporaries, particularly members of the burgeoning film censorship movement, revolted against. Critics of Bara's image felt that the actress's vamping reaffirmed that, if women were given the opportunity, they would misuse their newfound powers for questionable purposes. As Dijikstra explains, "[Theda Bara] became the cinematic expression of the early twentieth century male's nightmare conception of Woman, any woman, as vampire" (Dijikstra *ES* 269). As a result, many critics of Bara's films expressed fear that women would attempt to imitate the vamp and act out her dramatic criminal behavior. In one of his many critiques of female suffrage, Otto Weinenger described women's desire for equal rights as a craving with distinctly vampiric undertones: "what is of real importance in the woman question [is] the deep-seated craving to acquire man's character, to attain his mental and moral freedom, to reach his real interests and his creative power"(65). Building on many of the underlying concepts of criminological discourses, critics of vampire films interpreted Bara's character as a deviant example of female behavior that threatened the domestic social order by not being 'feminine' enough.

In fact, various fan magazines described Bara as "the symbol against which every woman's fist is raised": the "home-buster," "the arch-torpedo of domesticity," the "Ishmaelite of femininity," and the "terror of the flat housewife" (Franklin 70). Like the Victorian vampire before her, the twentieth-century vamp also threatened the domestic realm and women's place in that order. As one contemporary film critic explains in his

reaction to *A Fool There Was*, "[the vamp] committed . . . monstrous crimes against domesticity" by deploying her "most valuable proprieties: allure, aggression, and impatience at the sight of marriage" (Pratt 234). By aligning the vampire with domestic destruction, twentieth-century representations of the vamp stressed the correlation between female sexual aggression and widespread social destruction. In Browne's novelistic version of *A Fool There Was*, Schuyler is very attached to his domestic realm prior to meeting up with the Vampire:

> 'I don't like to leave it, Tom,' he said slowly, his eyes roaming over the bright, little room. 'I don't like to leave it even to hobnob with crowned heads, and to take tea with dukes, earls, princes and kings, to say nothing of mere lords. My world is right here; and it's all the world I want.' (Browne 98)

Similarly, in the film version of *A Fool There Was*, shots constantly alternate between the carnal realm of the Vampire, filmed in exotic darkened locals, and the bright domestic sphere of the Wife and Child. Even as film audiences progressively take the vamp less seriously, her ability to distract men from the pursuit of a traditional domestic lifestyle remained one of the vamp's greatest sources of power. As one film critic wrote in a popular fan magazine, a vamp, like Pola Negri, can cause a man to forget entirely about the pursuit of domestic bliss:

> The humdrum, the domestic, the everyday--they cease to exist where Pola is. She is the woman with whom you long to have an interlude of purely pagan, utterly Continental romance--a pagan, continental romance that will in no way interfere with your very real devotion to some nice girl who will make you a good wife, if you know what I mean and I'm sure you do, whether you will admit it or not. (Lyon 112)

Even when writing copy for the sensational stories of film fan magazines, writers insisted on aligning the female vampire with the destruction of the domestic realm. While they may seem humorous and outrageous to readers today, these types of stories suggested the

destructive potential and impressive power of the female vamp. By tempting men with the 'pagan' delights of vampirism and refusing to fulfill the role of the 'nice girl,' the vamp's sexual deviance hints at the post-suffrage world that critics feared most--a world where women refuse the role of wife and mother. At the same time, the popularity of these 'bad girl' images suggests the public's general dissatisfaction with the dominant discourse of the 'good,' asexual female.

Even as the vamp films began to wane in popularity, the plot lines continued to stress the deadly potential of the vampire and the need for men to be wary of her powers of seduction. In Cecil B. DeMille's first rendering of *The Ten Commandments* (1923), Nita Naldi takes on the role of the vamp, playing the part of the foreign seductress, Sally Lung, "an unclean, diseased woman" who comes slinking out of a gunny sack to threaten the male characters' physical and mental health. After the hero, Dan McTavish, takes on the vamp as his mistress, a friend warns him that he may not be able to handle such an exotic mistress: "Go easy, Son! This Sally Lung is half French and half Chinese. The combination of French perfume and Oriental incense is more dangerous than nitroglycerin" (1923). At times, stories told in film fan magazines presented disturbingly violent narratives that stressed the need for men to reclaim control from the cinematic vamp. In his 'humorous' recounting of an interview with popular screen vampire, Pola Negri, one reporter describes how a man might attempt to handle his desire for the aggressive vampire woman: "no man could look upon Pola without meeting desire face to face. And so you would be madly jealous of Pola and perhaps beat her, which she would like, and lock her up somewhere, if you were strong enough" (Lyon 112). Unlike the vampire women in *Dracula*, whom the men in the novel insisted on protecting, the

criminally deviant woman found on early-twentieth-century film screens was no longer protected by man's chivalrous instincts.

Although Bara likely never made it to the witness box at George Martinez's trial, her portrayal of vampire women also influenced the public perception of criminal behavior in women. Not only was Theda Bara compared to criminological models of female deviance, as was shown earlier in this chapter, she was also aligned with several actual notorious female criminals of her time and from history.[9] So closely linked was the public image of the female offender and the Hollywood image of the vampire that several women of the period were tried for criminal acts as though they were vampires. As Ann Jones explains in *Women Who Kill* (1980), moral panics around women and crime coincide with the periods when women make strides towards equality, and such panics often make a crude and perhaps unconscious attempt at controlling these advances. One particularly relevant case was that of Ruth Snyder, a woman who was tried, along with her lover Judd Gray, for killing her husband in 1927. In the statement used to explain his guilty verdict and justify the decision to impose the death sentence, the trial judge described Ruth Snyder in a manner that bears striking resemblance to the portraits of Theda Bara:

> That woman like a poisonous snake drew Judd Gray into her glistening coils, and there was no escape. It was a peculiarly alluring seduction. Just as a piece of steel jumps and clings to the powerful magnet, so Judd Gray came within the powerful, compelling, attractive force of that woman. She held him fast. This woman, this peculiarly venomous species of humanity, was abnormal, possessed of an all-consuming, all-absorbing passion, an animal lust, which seemingly was never satiated. (258).

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[9] In particular, Bara was often compared to Elizabeth Bathory, the seventeenth-century Hungarian woman who was accredited with the murder of over 600 women, whom she killed so that she might bath in their blood. According to Raymond T. McNally, the author of *Dracula was a Woman*, Bathory was also the main source of inspiration for Stoker's *Dracula*.

While her lover was also being tried for the brutal crime, the judge's comments suggest that Snyder's supernatural ability to draw her lover into her criminal endeavors is even more criminal than the actual act of killing her husband. The physical descriptions of Snyder found in contemporary newspapers also borrow from the language of criminology and the descriptions of the vamp, accusing her of " having no heart, being a bad woman, a bad wife, a bad mother, who did not even look like a woman. Attention was drawn to her dyed blonde hair, her 'masculine' jaw and her mouth, which was 'as cold, hard and unsympathetic as a crack in a dried lemon.'" (Kennedy 253). Snyder was also called, in various newspaper stories, the "blonde fiend," the "marble woman," "falling Ruth" and "the vampire" (Jones 256). In explaining the complicit behavior of Snyder's lover, who helped her carry out the murder, *The Herald Tribune* attributed Snyder with the hypnotic powers of the vamp, which caused her lover, Judd Gray, to act irrationally and be persuaded to commit murder: "All facts now adduced point to a love-mad man completely in the sway of the woman whose will was steel, and brain active and intelligent. She dominated him, police said, and forced her will upon him, even when he desired to back out on some of her proposals." (Jones 258). Whether discussing an actual court case or the on-screen vamping of an actress, judges and filmgoers alike attributed the man's willingness to commit criminal and immoral acts to the woman's malignant influence and hypnotic powers; the more evil a woman was, the greater was her power. Although Judd Gray was executed along with Snyder, the common understanding was that Gray was acting criminally against his will; he had succumbed to the influence of a highly skilled, predatory female vamp. In contrast to the monstrous portrayal of Snyder as a vampire, the newspaper stories associated with the trial insisted that the man should

retain his moral integrity, refusing to recognize Gray's culpability and willingly accepting the male lover as a 'victim' rather than a criminal. The story of Ruth Snyder's vamping also revealed the decreasing importance of chivalry in trying female criminals. In fact, many critics saw the suffrage movement as a means of justifying female capital punishment, stating that if woman was to go to the ballot-box, she should also go to the gallows if she committed a crime that warranted such punishment (Jones 192). As symptoms of vampiric criminality and masculine sexual aggression were attributed to an increasing number of women's crimes, the rhetoric of women's true femininity could no longer be rolled out in defense of the female offender's deviant actions. Although one might presume that the increasingly direct correlation of vamping and criminal convictions would stymie the vampire's popularity, the figure of the deviant vampire woman continued to flourish in a myriad of cultural forms.

While Jonathan Harker's encounter with *Dracula's* three vampire women prompts him to imagine a time when vampirism spread rampantly, when "in days of old, one vampire meant many," it was, in fact, the future of the Twentieth Century that would host the vampire in teeming numbers (Stoker 177). As Nina Auerbach explains, "not until the twentieth century was [the vampire] reproduced, fetishized, besequeled, and obsessed over" (*OVOS* 63). With the release of *A Fool There Was*, William Fox was transformed from a small-time producer to a major Hollywood player[10], Theda Bara skyrocketed to fame, and the silver screen began projecting seemingly endless reels of vampire film.

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[10]To fully grasp the impact of Bara's vamp roles on studio audiences, one need only look at the profits recorded by Fox Studios during the five-year span of Bara's career. In 1914, the year before the release of *A Fool There Was*, the Fox Studios recorded a profit of $272, 401; the studio was struggling to stay in business. That figure rose to $3,208,201 in 1915 and, in 1919, Bara's last big year, the Studio made $9,380, 883. Although the Fox Studios continued to produce non-Bara films during this period, Bara's films represented the studio's major box-office successes. (Genini 79)

Realizing that the vampire had big box-office potential, the Fox Studio sought to satisfy the public's unquenchable thirst for Theda the vamp, producing Bara movies almost monthly for more than three years. In fact, in the five years that she was under contract with Fox, Theda Bara starred in thirty-nine films and in all but six, the actress played the part of a vamp. As a result, Bara's face and name became synonymous with the words vamp and vampire and by February 1916, the *New York Times* estimated[11] that half a million people a day, or 182 million a year, were watching Theda Bara on-screen (Genini 63). Although she came to epitomize the vampire type, Bara's phenomenal success unleashed an army of now-forgotten screen-vamp competitors and for over half a decade, the movies were filled with vamping actresses who depicted female wickedness and sexual deviance.

Indicative of the vampire's social and cultural impact, the onslaught of 'Baraesque' representations of female vampirism carried enough weight to change popular language usage and permanently alter English language definitions. Prior to 1915 and the release of *A Fool There Was*, a 'vamp' was either a piece of stage music performed between acts or the upper part of a shoe and a vampire was a preternatural being, usually a reanimated corpse, who sought nourishment by sucking the blood of sleeping persons (OED)[12]. The impact of the painting, poem and play discussed earlier in this chapter, combined with Theda Bara's first big-screen success, quickly altered these centuries-old definitions: 'vamp' became a common abbreviation of vampire, and both words became popular signifiers for a wanton woman "who intentionally attract[ed] and exploit[ed] men, an

[11] Although these figures seem extraordinary, Genini explains that they were devised by calculating the number of film prints, theaters, seats and daily performances of Bara's films.
[12] For a complete, albeit complicated look at the genealogy of the word, 'vampire,' see Katharina M. Wilson's "The History of the Word *Vampire*." *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 46 (1985): 577-583.

adventuress; a Jezebel; frequently as a stock character in plays and films." (OED). As Ronald Genini explains, until the introduction of the word 'vamp' "there was no convenient phrase in use to describe her character or what she did, exactly" (55). While Bara's contemporary audiences did not distinguish between the vamp and the vampire, critics often choose to prioritize the impact of the male vampire by differentiating the female vamp from the 'real' vampire (labeling her a 'psychic' vampire, a femme fatale), or ignoring the place of the vamp in the history of the vampire entirely.[13]

In her study of the vampire's history, *Our Vampires Ourselves*, in which Theda Bara garners only a passing reference and a brief footnote, Nina Auerbach states: "with striking exceptions (particularly in the American 1970s), vampires are male creations; their most stellar incarnations are male; but in their well-bred inhibitions, many need women to act out their natures for them" (7). And yet, for at least a brief period of time, the female vampire, which sucked creative energy, intelligence and vigor rather than blood from men, dominated cultural representations of the monstrous type. From the 1890s to the 1920s, women dominated vampire iconography and the image of the female vampire quickly became a fundamental component of the popular imagination. Rather than simply creating another type of female monstrosity to add to the archives of ancient myth and folklore, the more popular female vamp supplanted, at least temporarily, the male vampire's[14] place in cultural representations. Whereas most critics choose to align the vamp with her similarly deviant yet less "monstrous" femme-fatale sister, I want to explore how early twentieth-century fears of female perversion precipitated a fusion of

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[13] See Pam Keesey's *Vamps* and Gayla Jamison Hamilton's *Theda Bara and the Vamp Phenomenon*.
[14] With the release of W. Murnau's tremendously successful *Nosferatu in 1922*, the male vampire was resurrected, thus regaining the dominant position in popular representations of vampiric activity.

two female types, the socially deviant 'masculine' woman and the ghoulish vampire.

This 'modern' twentieth-century vampire was not like the fifteenth century Romanian prince, Vlad the Impaler, or the seventeenth century lesbian Hungarian countess Elizabeth Bathory. As she was a far cry from the specters that had haunted hundreds of years of ancient superstition and myth, the popularity of the cinema vamp, and film's unique ability to broadcast her image incessantly, did effect a shift in the popular understanding of vampirism and the vampire's sexual function. Although vampirism is strongly associated with eroticism in today's cultural representations, in traditional vampire narratives vampirism was a *substitute* for sex and the act of drinking the victim's blood was an erotic act in itself. As James Twitchell explains, in traditional vampire-narratives, vampirism acts as a substitute for sexual intercourse: "[the] myth is loaded with sexual excitement; yet there is no mention of sexuality. It is sex without genitalia, sex without confusion, sex without responsibility, sex without guilt, sex without love--better yet, sex without mention" (112). In early twentieth-century narratives however, a new sexual dimension was added to the story of the vampire as vampire activity became synonymous with sexual activity, or at least a prelude to it, and to be guilty of vampirism was to be guilty of sexual depravity. Because this new vampire was an attractive, recognizably human woman, the vampire's libidinous desires and ability to overcome the male with her powers of sexual attraction took precedence over a physical lust for blood, and her pleasure in man's destruction became a symptom of greater sexual and moral corruption. In the vamp, one sees an emblematic visualization of female socio-sexual deviance, an embodiment of dangerous female sexuality as it began to

unfold at the beginning of the century and one that continues to haunt cultural representations on the verge of the next century.

With the rise of the vamp, vampirism entered a new phase of development that permitted her assimilation into the mainstream; vampires began inhabiting the common female form and popular language. With the tremendous success of her vampire movies, Bara's name and the practice of vampirism became a part of everyday language, with references to the actress and vampire activities frequently appearing in both sensationalistic fan magazines and more serious news stories. In 1918, a writer in the *Cleveland Leader* described the complete assimilation of 'Theda Bara' and vampirism into popular English language usage:

> To be a vampire now is to be a Thedabara, and vice versa. You often hear your highbrow friends remark of an actress giving a 'bara-esque performance,' or having a 'bara role.' And in the poolroom--if you frequent poolrooms--you'll hear some smart chappie characterize his lady fair as a 'regular Theda.' (Anon 1918)

The impact of Bara's vamping even extended into the 'legitimate' press, as writers relied on the public's recognition of the vampire image. In 1920, a *New York Times* article concerning London, England, described the capital as a "vampire city" which had taken a "Theda Bara role," draining Britain of its best youth. (Anon 2). In an attempt to satisfy the public interest in Bara's on-screen vamping, fan magazines published recipes for the "Theda Bara Sandwich"[15] and Fox Studios hosted a number of contests that searched for the perfect Theda Bara look-alike. Many years after *A Fool There Was* first appeared in theatres, the public continued to parrot Theda's tag line: 'Kiss me, my Fool!' Even decades later, a slightly revised version of this line, minus the vamp's characteristically

[15] The recipe for the "Theda Bara" sandwich was printed in *Photoplay*, February 1916.

possessive pronoun, continues to crop up[16]. As Marjorie Rosen explains in *Popcorn Venus*,

> She told her man, 'Kiss me, my fool'--and he did! Her silent command cut through the rubble of Victorian sentiment like a stiletto and an enthralled America parroted her. (67)

This parroting also involved the assimilation of various physical signifiers of vampire identity into early twentieth-century fashions. As one of the first screen actresses to rely on large quantities of make-up to create her roles--Theda's darkly-kohled eyes and extreme pallor were easily recognized as vampire trade marks--Bara helped popularize make-up, making the daily use of cosmetics by women fashionable (Keesey 77). As Ronald Genini describes, "An exotic pallor was cultivated by the most robust; necklines dropped alarmingly; and in a sudden wave of black that crossed the land, nubile girlhood appeared to be adopting universal mourning. Miss Bara made voluptuousness a common American commodity as accessible as chewing gum" (Genini 76). One need only look at the countless ads in film fan magazines from the period that advertised products to help women imitate Bara's pale, vampire skin, heavily made-up eyes and veiled attire to gauge the impact that the actress had on contemporary fashions. (See figures 14, 15). Although her female public could not imitate the extremely risqué costumes she wore on-screen, she did set fashion trends with the clothing she wore off-screen and in tamed down versions of her veils, jewels, and feathers. One news story related how fans started a near riot in a department store trying to get their hands on a certain dress that they had seen The Vampire admire (Keesey 77).

Conversely, the incessant use of the vamp formula and the barrage of female vampire images also helped precipitate the untimely death of the screen vamp and the end

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[16] Joanne Worley frequently used the line "Kiss me, *you* fool" on *Laugh-In* in the late 1960s.

of Theda Bara's brief career. As film and film culture moved into its third decade, the representation of sex began to rely more on glamour and fun than on the exoticism and destruction characteristic of Bara's vamping roles. By the beginning of the 1920s, the vamping refrain that Theda Bara had made famous, "Kiss me, my fool," had become high camp to the generation now smitten with the flapper, and by 1929 an article in *Century* magazine was able to ask, "Except 'A Fool There Was', who remembers the titles of one of the forty vamp films Theda Bara made in the three years of her movie career?" (Seldes 297). The vamp was quickly becoming old hat to filmgoers, and by the mid twenties, Theda Bara was no longer a mysterious, dangerous monster, but a caricature of pre-World War I morality. In *The Celluloid Sacrifice*, Alexander Walker describes the vamp image as "disenchanting"' to the post-World War I working girl:

> more and more in the 1920s sex on the screen, and off it, too, went with a job--the kind that a store assistant or office girl could see herself in and identify with the girl on the screen . . . And the vamp who sucked men's blood gave way to the flapper girl whose only aim was to 'snap a trap on a sucker's bank-roll'. (Walker 26).

Whereas many film critics claim that the overuse of the vamp formula and the end of the Great War precipitated her untimely death, I would argue that the vamp, as she was defined by the likes of Theda Bara, experienced a displacement rather than a complete demise with the end of film's second decade. Despite falling into disfavor with film audiences, the public's fascination with the vamp did not die with her excommunication from the silver screen. Instead, the vamp migrated to another form of popular entertainment as her image began dominating another booming twentieth-century American and British enterprise--sheet music publication. With vampire fever abating among filmgoers, Hollywood and the beginning of the jazz era spawned a new generation

of dangerous women drinking, smoking, dancing, and sporting makeup and short skirts. Enter, stage left, the baby vamp of popular song also known as the jazz baby or the flapper.

When Theodor Adorno joined the editorial board of the avant-garde music journal *Musikblätter des Anbruch* in 1929, he suggested a number of changes to the journal's mandate, including a recommendation that it "undertake the study of 'light music' and kitsch and that it do so with an attitude neither of arrogant dismissal or of simplistic celebration" (Engh 120). One of the most popular forms of light music flourishing during Adorno's time was that of sheet music. As it was tremendously popular and relatively inexpensive, sheet music plays an important part in our understanding of early twentieth-century cultural ideologies and interests. Of particular interest to my endeavor is an examination of the popular sheet music that appeared during the silent film years. Rather than investigate the aesthetic merits of the music itself, I will examine the lyrics in these pieces as important sources of information that reflect contemporary ideas on gender roles and the transgressive nature of the vamp.

Although the concept of silent movie music may present a curious contradiction to today's readers who are unfamiliar with early film presentation, from the very beginning of film production and presentation musical accompaniment was used to enhance the pantomime of the silent screen. Often, songs were played by pit musicians in the theatres, and were readily available to buy and play at home. In addition, theme songs from current movies with cover photos of favorite film players, or caricatures of them, further publicized the films, increasing attendance at the box office and creating spin-off sales in music. In fact, silent-movie sheet music represented the first attempt by

film studios to "tie in" merchandise in order to capitalize on the popularity of certain films, and film players--a marketing technique that is now deemed integral to the success of today's biggest movie studios. As society was represented with the technologically disembodied image of actors on screen, movie music and popular song sheets gave voice to both the silent cinema vamp and her victims.

Two years before Bara's image hit the screen, the first piece of sheet music depicting the antics of the female vampire appeared in response to Porter Emerson Browne's popular Broadway play, *A Fool There Was*. The lyrics of the song closely follow the play's narrative and the popular Kipling[17] ballad from which they were inspired, telling the story of a man who is devastated by the vamping of a beautiful woman. The cover reinforces the destructive powers of this female figure. (See figure 16). In keeping with the newly emerging popular image of the vampire, this woman causes domestic disorder, as can be seen by the broken lamp and scattered books, and leaves her victims to stumble through life as lesser versions of their former selves. The image on the cover of the sheet shows the male victim holding his head, indicating a questionable mental state, and with unbuttoned collar and vest, suggesting abatement in physical strength and personal dignity. As the singer explains, the vampire strips the Fool of his pride, his faith and his intelligence, "All that is good in him has gone/ His heart is cold and dead." As in the poem and play, the speaker stresses the authenticity of his pathetic narrative: "Stories just like these are real, And I have mine to tell." The cover design of the sheet furthers the image of vampire authenticity in that the woman depicted mirrors the beautiful and very real looking woman of the Burne-Jones painting,

[17] The "Vampire" book shown on the cover of the sheet likely refers to the numerous printings of the Kipling poem that appeared at the time.

characteristics that would also resurface in the various incarnations of Theda Bara's vamp.

Between 1915 and 1920, dozens of vamp song sheets paying tribute to Theda Bara were written. As the silent film actress had no audible on-screen voice and the titles that attribute words to her were few, the utterances and actions credited to the actress via sheet music lyrics played an important role in audience perception of fictional narratives and even the real-life actions of female actors. With the sheet "I've Lost You So Why Should I Care," published in 1916, the degenerative powers of the vamp are reflected in yet another narrative of woman's ability to cause masculine destruction. (See figure 17). The photograph on the cover shows Theda Bara in mourning apparel and the lyrics tell of a man who just barely survives Bara's seductive advances. Another sheet entitled "In the City of Broken Hearts," also appearing in 1916, reflects the same dark image of social destruction precipitated by a sexually deviant woman. Again, the form of Theda Bara, a sinister yet very real looking woman, is used for the cover of the sheet. (See figure 18). At this stage in the vampire's development, she retains her strong physical semblance to 'real' and common Caucasian women along with her ability to cause genuine concern among her audience.

In response to the popularity of imitating the 'exotic' vampire actresses' dress, mannerisms and speech, many songs warned of the dangers posed by women's acting out the narratives' sexual play off-screen. As the image of the exotic vamp became associated with an increasing number of women both on and off screen, sheet music narratives began warning of everyday women's desire to imitate the predacious sexual actions of their favorite stars. Such songs began telling stories of women who went to

picture shows only to come home looking like Theda Bara or some other vamping figure. The 1917 sheet, "Since Sarah Saw Theda Bara" tells the story of Sarah Cohn, who "became a holy terror" after seeing the vamp on screen. Although the cover image suggests a more light-hearted look at vamping techniques, the lyrics insist on the dangers posed by the ever-increasing ranks of vampire women. (See figure19). The subject of the song finds it easy to imitate Theda's game and, as the speaker explains, "One kiss from her and you are done, 'Cause her lips, they are just like chloroform! Since Sarah saw Theda Bara, She's a wera, wera dangerous girl." While this particular song is more comedic than earlier vamping stories, the narrative of Sarah's vampire masquerade reveals the social unease caused by young women's increasing imitation of on-screen-sexual subjects like Theda Bara. In an attempt to expose the dangers of this kind of imitation, Herbert Blumer published the results of his survey of delinquent teenage girls--whose 'crimes' ranged from shoplifting, smoking, playing truant from school and having illicit 'affairs' with older men--and their response to motion pictures. According to his text, forty-three percent of the girls surveyed admitted that movies gave them "the itch to make money easily" and "seventy-two percent of them [admitted] to having improved their attractiveness by imitating the movies" (118). While these examples of 'deviant' behavior would seem relatively harmless to today's analysts, early twentieth-century women's imitation of the vamp's sexual liberty caused genuine concern among social critics and the general public--a concern that was reflected in countless pieces of popular sheet music from the period.

Although many of the popular songs most closely associated with vamping were comedy numbers, it wasn't until 1919, the year that Bara's contract with Fox expired, that

the image of the vampire became more directly linked to comedy and humour. As her vamping antics became increasingly 'passé' and comedic, vaudevillé comics and review producers spoofed Theda's image, to the delight of record-buyers and audiences. Byron Gay's song, "The Vamp," represents one of the most popular vamp tunes of the day, boasting sales of over 200,000 copies in America and abroad. Although the cover art by Henry Hutt showcased a vampish woman with red lips, heavy-lidded eyes and bobbed hair adorned with an extremely large red rose, the trademark vamp flower, Gay's tune was very lighthearted in tone. (See figure 20). "The Vamp" focused on the popular vamp-dance craze rather than the antics of the vampire woman herself, urging listeners: "Everybody do the vamp--vamp until you get a cramp!" Another popular song, entitled "She's A Mean Job," (1921) appears to reflect the same comedic image used by Gay. The cover image shows a cartoon woman in a short skirt, bobbed hair and lavish costume, leaving a string of equally cartoonish men and traffic stopped behind her. (See figure 21). And yet, the message of this 'comedic' music also stresses the disastrous results of female vamping. As the speaker explains, this diminutive figure, the "Vampy girlie," still "sets em' crazy . . With one look into her eyes/ Men go home and beat their wives." Although she doesn't harm women directly, the vamp's actions create social chaos and begin to threaten other women by causing men to act violently. In addition, this vampire is characterized by physical ailment and the ability to spread her degenerative tendencies among the general population: "And though I never heard that she was ill/ Still Doctors send prescriptions for Ginger ale afflictions/ She leads the mob 'cause she's a mean job."

Many of the song sheets from this period focused on the vamp's reduction of power by stressing her inability to fulfill a 'respectably feminine' role and emphasizing

the personal unhappiness the vamp would endure rather than her ability to destroy others. While earlier depictions of the vamp in novels and films portrayed the female vamp as a force to be reckoned with, these newer dramatizations of vamping mocked the deviant woman and stripped the female seductress of her power. In the sheet, "Just a Girl That Men Forget," published in 1923, the vamp is depicted in flapper garb, weeping in front of a church where a wedding appears to be taking place. (See figure 22). In this lyric, the vamp/victim roles are reversed, as the vamp becomes a plaything for her male suitors to enjoy for a time, only to toss away in favor of her old-fashioned sister:

> You're the kind of girl that men forget,
> Just a toy to enjoy for a while
> For when men settle down they always get an old fashioned girl
> With an old fashioned smile

In the proliferation of images depicting vamping women in the 1920s, the focus shifts from the harm that a seductive woman can do to a man to focus on the harm a vamp can do to herself. The narratives no longer tell the story of a man destroyed by a woman's vamping and being robbed of money and intellect. Rather, in this new narrative twist, the woman is denied the pleasure of marriage and a happy home and the focus is on teaching the woman a lesson, particularly women who try to imitate the actions of the 'professional' screen vamps.

While earlier depictions of the vamp stressed her social deviance and threatening power, these songs depicted female vamping as a hobby of the overly 'modern' woman's foolishness--a hobby that would leave this sexually liberated woman unhappy and powerless. And yet, even when suffering from this substantial reduction in power, the story of the vamp in popular music continued to focus on her ability to challenge the domestic order and destroy traditional domestic and social structures. In "Sally Green

The Village Vamp (see figure 23), the vamp learns her vamping ways in the city and returns home with a "wicked smile," "high-heeled shoes and fancy hose," painted cheeks and a powdered nose. As a result, the entire social order is turned topsy turvy and once productive men are turned into useless 'rubes': "Rubes shirk their work; No one's even workin' in the corn field/ There's no one to do the hayin' and the gosh-darned hens have all stopped layin'/ Now the whole town's upside down, and ev'ry body blames the village vamp." Due to a woman's vamping ways, a once-productive society degenerates into a society of chaos and unrestrained pleasure.

And while many sheet-music vampires learned their vampin' ways from movie stars and glamorous city girls, the art of vamping was increasingly linked to ethnic otherness. In particular, many vamping songs told stories of the dangers of women traveling to exotic locals where they learned to dress in sexually explicit clothing and indulge in 'unfeminine' activities such as smoking tobacco. The 1921 song sheet, "Rebecca Came Back From Mecca," depicts the pleasure one woman derives from imitating an orientalist vamp. The speaker tells how Rebecca went "one day To Turkey far away/ And she lived near the Sultan's den/ She stayed there just two years. Got full of new ideas." The 'new' ideas that the vamp learns while visiting Turkey, including smoking 'tobecca,' wearing "veils up on her face" and sharing her revealing new clothing with her sister, indicate the vamp's atavistic slide into an absurd and inappropriate 'feminine' role. (See figure 24). In effect, the orientalist masquerade provides Rebecca with a metaphorical space for sexual transgression and acts as a manifestation of the dysgenic forces of biological reversion.

As can be seen by the portrayal of Rebecca, popular sheet music of the time highlighted the process by which all ethnicities were brought under one umbrella in the assignment of female stereotypes. In these narratives, a variety of ethnicities were often blurred together in a miscegenetic portrayal of woman's atavistic slide that predetermined her deviant behavior and threat to racial advancement. In "Hindu Rose (The Oriental Vamp)," published in 1919, the lyric narrative reveals the cultural insistence on the vamp's atavistic qualities. This sheet, which includes the composer's directions of interpretation for the player to create a "tom-tom effect," tells the story of a vamping Hindu girl named Rose who was "somewhat shy on clothes." Although this woman is able to vamp the circus "fat man," Rose reveals herself to be a flawed vampire by falling for a man who is as marked with atavistic deviance as she--the "tattooed man." In Sophie Tucker's[18] vamping tune, "There's Something Spanish in My Eyes, (1928), the Jewish songstress takes to comic extremes the process by which several ethnicities are often jumbled together in the creation of female sexual stereotypes: 'There's something Spanish in my eyes/ My mother is Jewish, my father is Irish/ Which proves that I'm Spanish, and I love you." The lyric narrative of "Vamping Sal, The Sheba of Georgia[19]" (1922) tells the story of a southern vamp, a "high coloured" girl that vamps like "Salome" "thru the land of cotton," vamping "the preachers out of Sunday school" and stealing "sweet mamas" daddies. (See figure 25). In blending together images of the 'far east' seductress with the southern "high coloured" vamp, these song sheets stressed the sexually aggressive

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[18] See Peter Antelyes "Red hot mamas" for an interesting examination of the images of Sophie Tucker and Bessie Smith in American popular song.

[19] A photographic image of Sophie Tucker, who popularized this song, appears on the cover to this sheet. (See figure 25). Interestingly, Tucker often sang this song using the masculine pronoun for the vamp, calling herself "Vampin' Sal, the *Sheik* of Georgia." (*my emphasis*)

woman's tendency toward dysgenic miscegenation--a tendency that was particularly threatening to the project of racial advancement.

Although the illustration accompanying the song sheet "Louisville Lou" is fair-skinned, her vamping narrative also reflects the notion that the newest version of the vamp was to be found "down south." (See figure 26). This is a woman with "Big black eyes and she rolls 'em! hot lips, that are pips/ And no more conscience than a snake has hips." The speaker explains to his male listener that "if he meets this high brown doll/ They you haven't got a chance at all . . . Even Old Black Joes who are old and weak/ Hang around and want to be her Sheik." Although earlier depictions of the cinema vamp explored the 'dangers' of miscegenation by fabricating exotic identities for screen stars, few vamp screen roles were actually played by the visible minorities they sought to represent. In contrast, the songstress vamp expanded upon the popular construct of the vamp as racial other by portraying the vamping antics of black women, like Louisville Lou and Vamping Sal, who used their sexual prowess to seduce men of all ages and races.

Rather than relying on the physical image of a woman's body, these lyric narratives focus on the seductive power of the female voice: "This gal's greatest of the vamps I know/ She does vamping by the radio." While the vamp was being displaced from her central position on the silver screen, she began appearing in jazz clubs. With the Jazz Age, the vamp lost Theda Bara's aggressive serpentine bite and melodramatic story line; the vamp, as portrayed by the likes of Theda Bara, had become cliché, a stock character found not in the heavily-scented, tapestry-laden palaces of foreign locales and intricately designed media rooms, but in music halls, comedy revues, and Vaudeville

routines. For the more sophisticated movie audiences of the twenties who were becoming increasingly accustomed to the image of the female sexual subject, elements of fantasy or comedy were needed to make the aggressive female successful and credible. With the arrival of the thirties, movie studios completely revamped the vamp: her aggressive edge was softened; her image was overhauled, her powers became those of sophisticated mystery rather than evil destruction and she became known by another alias--the femme fatale.

With film production moving into its third decade, the vamp relocated from moving pictures to the jazz scene, thus inspiring the subtitles of baby vamp, jazz baby and flapper and becoming a source of humor rather than a cause for fear. Although Bara continued to enjoy tremendous popularity outside of the movie studio, her notoriety relied on a caricature of a now-dated acting style and the increasingly comical man-eating-woman stereotype that defined her roles. As changes to modern acting styles and rapid advancements in movie-making practices made Bara's staged performances seem ludicrous, what was once a symbol of reckless female sexuality bent on creating social chaos, quickly became a cartoon character, inspiring the playful sexual innuendo of Betty Boop's 'boop-boop-a-doop.' Film makers, and the actresses who worked for them, soon realized that if the vamp hoped to distinguish herself from this chorus-line of flapper girls and jazz babies, she would need to make another costume change and devise some new vamping techniques. In my third and final chapter, I will look briefly at the images of Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich as spin-off representations of the vamp that further the construction of the female vampire as a transgendered body.

Figure 8. "The Vampire." Edward Burne-Jones, 1897.

Figure 9. Studio publicity photo of Theda Bara, circa 1917.

Figure 10. Studio publicity photo for La Belle Ruse, 1919.

Figure 11. Publicity photo of Theda Bara, circa 1917.

Figure 12. Publicity photo for Sin, 1915.

Figure 13. Publicity shot, circa 1916.

Figure 14. Advertisement from *Photoplay*, June 1918.

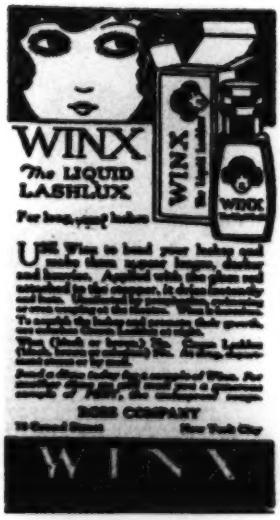

Figure 15. "Winx for long vamp lashes." Advertisement from *Photoplay*, March 1917.

Figure 16. *A Fool There Was* sheet music cover, copyright, 1913.

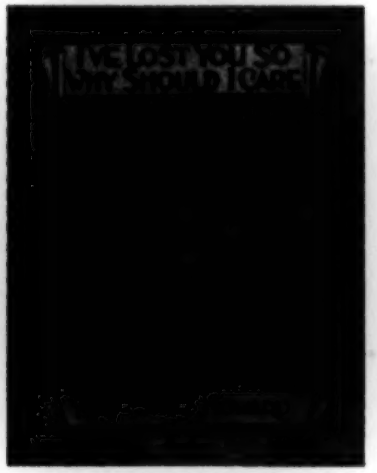

Figure 17. *I've Lost You So Why Should I Care*. song sheet, 1916

Figure 18. *In the City of Broken Hearts*, 1916.

Figure 19. *Since Sarah Saw Theda Bara*, 1917.

Figure 20. Byron Gay's *The Vamp*, 1919.

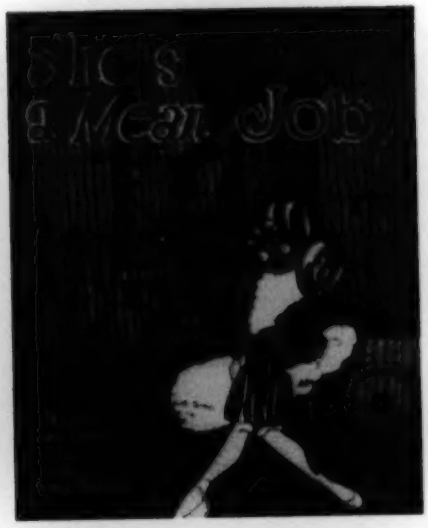

Figure 21. *She's a Mean Job*, 1921.

Figure 22. *Just a Girl that Men Forget*, 1923

Figure 23. *Sally Green the Village Vamp*, 1920.

Figure 24. *Rebecca Came Back From Mecca,* 1921.

Figure 25. *Vamping Sal,* 1922

Figure 26. Louisville Lou (That Vampin' Lady), 1923.

3

Undressing a Transgressive Potential and the Queer Meaning of Top Hats and Pointed Teeth

As Michel Foucault explains in *The History of Sexuality*, the nineteenth-century proliferation of discourses on homosexuality resulted in both the "advance of social controls into the area of perversity," and the legitimization of homosexual identities: homosexuality "began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (101). While discussions of sexual inversion first appeared in the Victorian scientific and medical texts discussed in chapter one, these pseudoscientific discourses also surface in popular literature and film of the modernist period. In particular, it was with the publication of Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness,* in 1928 that sexual inversion became a familiar topic and the characteristics of the invert became widely recognized by the general public. Radclyffe Hall's novel tells the story of a woman who, while struggling to reconcile her body's 'feminine' outward appearance with her internal 'masculine' gender identity, comes to recognize herself as a sexual invert. Heavily influenced by theories of female sexual inversion, Hall's novel is replete with references to the pseudoscientific discourses of female homosexuality. In fact, the main character, Stephen Gordon, reads like a prototype of the invert, embodying all of the physical and cerebral characteristics that Havelock Ellis saw as standard symptoms of female inversion. As Judith Halberstam explains, due to its tremendous popularity and widespread circulation, Hall's novel was the "first internationally distributed discussion of the plight of the masculine woman" (103).

Although the image of the mannish woman had been a controversial image connoting social trespassing since the introduction of Amelia's bloomers in 1861[1], it was not until what one critic calls the "Radclyffe Hall period of the 1920s" that masculine dress became a recognizable indicator of female social deviance and sexual inversion. (Wilson 69). Just as filmmakers of the 1910s had borrowed from the faddish image of Burne-Jones' "Vampire" in their portrayal of deviant female sexuality, filmmakers of the 1930s imitated the popular image of the sexual invert found in Hall's groundbreaking novel. Motivated by a combination of the public's waning interest in the overused image of the vamp, the growing sophistication of moviegoers, and the increasing limitations imposed by censorship laws, film studios began looking for a new means of representing the female sexual subject. In response to this demand for change, movie studios presented a new siren, a woman who was bold, assertive and 'masculine' in her desires and demands, yet decidedly less monstrous than her vamping predecessors. In contrast to the long dark hair, cavernous eyes and red lips used to identify the original cinema vamp as a sexual deviant, the vamp of the thirties borrowed her costume from another closet, relying heavily on the 'mannish' physical and psychical characteristics of the sexually inverted woman. As Rebecca Bell-Metereau explains, "In the United States, with its strict censorship of sexuality, when directors could not make a woman sexy by accentuating her feminine characteristics, they increased her sex appeal by making her more masculine" (Bell-Metereau 72). While she continued to wreak havoc on the men around her, the vamp of the 1930s projected a deviant female image that, by virtue of her crisp suits and top hats, bobbed hair and swaggering step, reflected the increasingly familiar image of female sexual inversion.

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[1] Amelia Bloomer introduced her bloomers in 1861 in the hopes that they would permit women greater freedom of movement.

While her evil and unnatural powers of destruction were diminished and her predatory style of seduction was tempered, the mannish vamp of the 1930s, like her vampire predecessors, continued to spell danger for the men who were unfortunate enough to cross her path. As with Theda Bara's vamp, the mannish woman of the early thirties was often an immoral temptress whose sexual powers far surpassed the appeal of the conventional good woman, and whose "aggressiveness conquered the uninterested bachelor and the Casanova alike" (Bell-Metereau 68). Just as critics were opposed to female suffrage because it sought to annihilate the specificity of female sexuality, images of mannish women were interpreted by social critics of the 1920s and 1930s as indicators of social disorder, moral decay and sexual excess.

While critical studies of the vamp and the femme fatale usually insist on a strong demarcation between the two types, the decline of the vamp and the rise of the femme fatale involved a much more gradual transition than the criticism would imply. In Joseph von Sternberg's 1930 film, *The Blue Angel*, Marlene Dietrich plays a vamping role that marks the transition between the monstrous female sexual predator and her mannish counterpart. (See figure 27). As Rebecca Bell-Metereau explains, "The femme fatale of Marlene Dietrich is one of the last serious screen portrayals of the vamp. After her such women were no longer fatal; they became comic, occasionally tragic, or they were the transmogrified buddy, the masculine-feminine career woman"(70). In *The Blue Angel*, Emil Jannings plays an aging professor who becomes enchanted with Dietrich's Lola Lola, a vamping cabaret singer who occasionally dons a top hat and walks with a swagger when attempting to seduce the professor.

As one would expect of a heartless vamp, Dietrich's character taunts the professor and repeatedly teases and humiliates him. Like Bara's vamp characters, Lola Lola insists on holding the 'masculine' position of power in her sexual relationship with the professor and delights in the

man's pathetic and senseless devotion. Although Dietrich's seductive behavior seems more benign than the deadly vamping techniques of Bara, Dietrich's conduct results in the same pitiful incapacitation of the male that Bara precipitated in her male victims. The sexually predatory women played by Marlene Dietrich represented another omnipotent, unfathomable destroyer and man was again the eternal victim to her mysterious power. As Andrea Weiss explains, "Such expressions reflect the new body of thought that shaped public consciousness in the early twentieth century, that saw homosexuality as deviance and the New Woman as sexual pariah" (48). While Dietrich's Lola Lola has much in common with Theda Bara's vampire, Dietrich's character adds an element of obvious physical masculinity to her vamp character. Although her transcendence of gender is only temporary, Lola Lola belongs to the emerging category of the mannish women that sexologists and criminal anthropologists were cautioning against.

For Marlene Dietrich, frequent albeit fleeting images of female masculinity became one of the actress' trademarks. As another cabaret singer in *Blonde Venus (1932)*, Dietrich appears in male attire only once--wearing a white tuxedo--after she has been rejected by her husband and has had her son taken away from her. In this film, Dietrich's cross-dressing is used to substantiate her depiction as a deviant woman and an unfit mother. Similarly, Dietrich's famous performance in *Morocco* (1930) is most often remembered for the very brief scene in which the actress appears dressed in a top hat and tails. During this scene, Dietrich tries to catch the attention of Tom Brown, played by Gary Cooper, by flirting with another woman and kissing her on the lips before presenting Cooper with a flower. While the 'lesbian' flirtation serves the function of advancing the heterosexual romantic plot, by giving the flower to Cooper, Dietrich inverts the proper order of sexual conduct by playing the aggressively 'masculine' part in much the same way Theda Bara's vamp inverted traditional gender roles. In addition, Dietrich's tuxedo

is invested with the power derived both masculinity and social class, powers which surpass those of her love object, Tom Brown, who is dressed in the uniform of a poor French legionnaire. (See figure 28). Although her mannish transgression is only a briefly-worn costume and the possibility for a sustained lesbian reading is prevented by the film's insistence on a heteronormative conclusion, Dietrich's sartorial borrowings and assertive vamping allow her to temporarily transcend the traditional feminine role. For lesbian viewers, the mannish woman's temporary escape from societal limitations was seductive, inviting viewers to image their own desires for transcendence. Yet, as Richard Dyer points out, there are limits to the transgression:

> Audiences cannot make media images mean anything they want to, but they can select from the complexity of the image the meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions, that work for them. (Dyer 5)

In Rouben Mamoulian's 1933 film, *Queen Christina*, Greta Garbo's portrayal of the lesbian Swedish Queen manages, in spite of the film's heterosexual romantic plot, to inscribe her character with some recognizable attributes of the sexual invert. While the real-life story of the Queen's reign, avoidance of marriage, lesbian love affair, and eventual loss of the throne is subordinate to the fabricated affair between Christina and Don Antonio, (played by John Gilbert) Garbo's depiction of the Queen retains some of her lesbian sexual identity. As Andrea Weiss explains, Garbo "brought to her portrayal of Christina sufficient sexual ambiguity for her movements, voice, and manner to become codes for lesbian spectators." (38). While the often-mentioned scene in which Queen Christina passionately kisses Countess Ebba challenges obvious boundaries of sexual propriety, there are other subtle visual clues that also allow for a lesbian reading. (See figure 29). In particular, the scene in which Garbo is shown dressing in male attire strongly suggests the Queen's inherently mannish nature. Rather than represent the process of cross-dressing as a difficult one, the act of donning 'masculine' clothing seems to be a

daily ritual for Queen Christina. The procedure is unremarkable for both parties and the movements necessary to get Christina ready for the 'masculine' tasks of horseback riding and court appearances are easily coordinated. As Andrea Weiss explains, "because of this scene's fluidity, Christina's cross-dressing fails to appear as a transvestite reversal, in which a woman transforms herself into a man, but rather that of a woman who remains a woman while rejecting the dominant codes of femininity, and the process is naturalized by the ease with which it is done" (38). Just as Stephen Gordon expressed her disdain for feminine clothing *in The Well of Loneliness*, Garbo's Christina appears infinitely more comfortable wearing mannish dress.

In addition, Mamoulian's narrative of also stresses the Queen's complete disregard for appropriate 'feminine' behavior in that she openly rejects the possibility of marriage, despite the serious implications such a rejection would have on the royal inheritance. After she declares to the Chancellor, "I do not wish to marry, and they can't force me," the Chancellor cautions: "you cannot die an old maid". In a statement that directly masculinizes her character, Christina responds by saying, "I have no intention to, Chancellor. I shall die a bachelor." While Garbo's *Queen Christina* renounces her 'bachelorhood' upon falling in love with Don Antonio, the Spanish ambassador dies before they are united, leaving Christina alone continue pursuing her bachelor life.

Greta Garbo, in *Queen Christina* and Marlene Dietrich in *Morocco* and *Blonde Venus* each evoke aspects of the mannish lesbian of the 1920s and 1930s--a figure that was sexually powerful, yet ultimately defeated and impotent. Although the conclusions of *Queen Christina* and *Morocco* ultimately affirm the heterosexual contract, the vamping women's appropriation of male clothing while retaining female identity, their aloof and inscrutable manners and their

aggressive sexual and social independence provided an alternative model upon which lesbian spectators could draw.

The 'mannish' vamp, a sexually and socially independent woman outfitted in male attire, is suggestive in that she simultaneously calls attention to gender distinctions and blurs the boundaries between acceptable gender roles. Due to the connection between female sexual inversion and mannish dress, sartorial borrowing of men's clothing suggests a threatening desire for 'masculine' intelligence and man's superior social positioning that parallels the corrupt desires of the vampire. Whereas theories of sexual inversion rendered the image of cross-dressing a symptom of sexual pathology, the image of women in 'mannish' dress also retained a certain ambiguity of meaning due to the publicly recognized connection between the suffrage movement and women's sartorial borrowing from men's closets. Despite the increasingly strong connections between sexual inversion and a female propensity for men's clothing, women's wearing of mannish clothing also enabled an ease of movement and the completion of tasks that would be impossible when wearing traditional women's clothing. It was this ambiguity, which blurred the boundary between the mannish, sexually deviant woman and the 'normal' woman that film producers hoped to capitalize on. In fact, during the 1930s, Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo became indicative representations of this ambiguity and "made cross-dressing a major part of their on-screen images and were important in introducing long pants as a part of a woman's costume" (Bullough 361). As in Lombroso's analysis of the female offender, the anatomical differences between deviant women and 'normal' women are not to be relied on; whether one is attempting to make visible female inversion or criminality, the boundary between acceptable behavior and abhorrent activity is complicated by the intrinsically deviant nature of all women. As pointed out in my discussion of female criminality in chapter one, this inability to distinguish

between the 'normal' woman and the deviant woman precipitates an unsettling disruption of a social construct, that an ideal femininity can be achieved or represented.

Although she undergoes regular transformations and costume changes, the female vampire continues to vamp her way into screen portrayals of female sexuality. The highly sensual history of the vampire, with its overlapping images of atavistically 'feminine' and regressively 'mannish' female aggression and repeated references to sexual 'perversity' and deviance, provides a rich foundation for tales of transgressive desire. Coupling together two female social outlaws, the sexual invert and the deviant vampire woman, the realm of the mannish vamp of the thirties provided a space for articulating desires that culture evoked and yet forbid, desires that challenged the dominant social order. According to George Chauncey, it was the invert's usurpation of male privilege that defined her sexuality and marked her as dangerous: the "polarization of masculine and feminine sexuality suggests that the perversion . . . was not so much in the object of the woman's sexual desires as in the masculine, aggressive form it took" (Chauncey 119).

In their myriad attempts to track the vampire and map out his or her characteristics, most critics agree on one important vampiric attribute--the vampire's transformative potential. Whether it be Stoker's *Dracula*, Burne-Jones' *Vampire* or Theda Bara's *Cleopatra*, vampires exhibit an uncanny ability to adapt to their surroundings, adjust their physical appearance and modify their vamping tactics to suit the world in which they live. As Nina Auerbach explains, "vampires blend into the changing cultures they inhabit . . . they are consummate turncoats, more formidable in their flexibility than in their love, their occult powers, or their lust for blood" (*OVOS* 6, 8). At the turn of the century, the vampire became a mutating metaphor, representing women's increasing social and sexual mobility --she progressed from a way of being Other to a

way of becoming otherwise. With Theda Bara's role in *A Fool There Was*, the vamp becomes a threatening figure from the margins who, as a virulent, degenerate body, enters, corrupts and destroys the physical vigor and moral cleanliness of the bourgeois body. During the 1930s, the inversion model of same-sex desire was used to facilitate the entry of the vamp into the lesbian visual field, establishing a set of mannish characteristics that could presumably be read onto the female vampire's body. In that she is increasingly interpreted as an embodiment of the overly 'masculine' female sexual subject, the vamp's body is a transgendered body that operates as a 'mannish' fashion while still being read *as* a woman. In the present day, in a culture full of gothic vampires and cross-dressers, we have witnessed the transformation of the vampire and the mannish woman into a figure to be celebrated, a wonderful, complex, multiform creature rather than a symbol of stigmatized depravity and degeneration. For many modern-day fans, it is precisely the vamp's sexual otherness, the opportunity for sexual and social deviation, which makes the figure so attractive and it is this potential for deviation that will ensure the vampire's continued survival.

Figure 27 . Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*, 1930.

Figure 28. Marlene Dietrich in *Morocco*, 1930

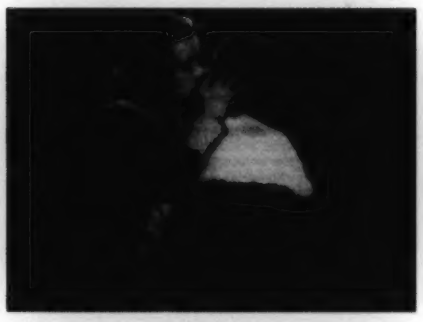

Figure 29. The infamous kiss between Queen Christina and Countess Ebba, 1933

Appendix 1

"The Vampire"

A Fool there was and he made his prayer--
(Even as you and I)
To a rag and a bone and a hank of hair--
(We called her the woman who did not care)
But the fool he called her his lady fair--
(Even as you and I.)

Oh, the years we waste and the tears we waste--
And the work of our head and hand
Belong to the woman who did not know--
(And now we know that she never could know)
And did not understand.

A Fool there was and his goods he spent--
(Even as you and I.)
Valor and faith and sure intent--
(And it wasn't the least what the lady meant)
But a fool must follow his natural bent
(Even as you and I.)

Oh, the toil we lost and the spoil we lost--
And the excellent things we planned
Belong to the woman who didn't know why--
(And now we know she never knew why)
And did not understand.

The Fool was stripped to his foolish hide--
(Even as you and I.)
Which she might have seen when she threw him aside--
(But it isn't on record the lady tried)
So some of him lived but the most of him died--
(Even as you and I.)

But it isn't the shame, and it isn't the blame
That sting like a white hot brand--
It's coming to know that she never knew why--
(Seeing at last that she never knew why)
And could never understand.

Rudyard Kipling, 1897

Filmography

List of Abbreviations

d. Director
l.p. Leading players
p.c. Production company

The Blue Angel Germany, 1930
l.p.: Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings
d.: Josef von Sternberg

Blonde Venus USA, 1932
d.: Josef von Sternberg
l.p: Marlene Dietrich,
p.c.: Paramount

Cleopatra USA, 1917
d.: J. Gordon Edwards
l.p: Theda Bara, Fritz Leiber, Thurston Hall, Albert Roscoe, Genevieve Blinn
p.c.: Fox Film Corporation

A Fool There Was: a psychological drama USA, 1915
d.: Frank Powell
l.p: Theda Bara, Edward José, Mabel Fremyear, Frank Powell
p.c.: William Fox Vaudeville Company

La Belle Russe USA, 1919
d.: Charles J. Brabin
l.p: Theda Bara, Warburton Gamble, Marian Stewart, Robert Lee Keeling
p.c.: Fox Film Corporation

Morocco USA, 1930
d.: Josef von Sternberg
l.p: Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper
p.c.: Paramount

Queen Christina USA, 1933
d.: Rouben Mamoulian
l.p: Greta Garbo, John Gilbert
p.c: MGM

The Serpent USA, 1916
d.: Raoul A. Walsh
l.p: Theda Bara, George Walsh, James Marcus, Lillian Hathaway
p.c.: Fox Film Corporation

Sin USA, 1915
d.: Herbert Brenon
l.p: Theda Bara, William E. Shay, Warner Orland
p.c.: Fox Film Corporation

The Ten Commandments USA, 1923
d.: Cecil B. DeMille
l.p: Nita Naldi, Rod LaRocque, Leatrice Joy
p.c.: Famous Players-Lasky

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